

# WisDems: ICYMI: U.S. Sen. Johnson steps on political land mine with Social Security, Medicare comments

Posted on Wednesday, Aug 10, 2022

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**MADISON, Wis.** — The [fallout continues](#) for Sen. Ron Johnson after he has repeatedly threatened to cut Social Security and Medicare for Wisconsinites who have spent decades paying into these programs. Johnson also [doubled down](#) on his position during a radio interview yesterday, making it clear he wants to put these vital programs on the chopping block.

**[The Hill: Johnson steps on political land mine with Social Security, Medicare comments](#)**

*Key Points:*

Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), a stalwart Senate ally of former President Trump, is facing fresh uncertainty in his race for reelection after telling a podcast last week that Social Security and Medicare should be classified as discretionary spending, with Congress authorized to set their budgets every year.

But now Johnson is on the defensive as Democrats have political ammo to claim that he wants to cut the two popular entitlement programs, a strategy they used effectively against Republicans in the past.

Now Johnson is being asked to defend his comments to “The Regular Joe Show” podcast calling for Congress to review and approve the annual budgets of Medicare and Social Security, instead of letting them rise automatically, which they do as mandatory spending programs.

And he says he’s been calling for making Medicare and Social Security discretionary

programs subject to an annual budget for years.

“I’ve been saying for as long as I’ve been here that we should transfer everything, put everything on budget so we have to consider it if every year. I’ve said that consistently, it’s nothing new,” he said.

“These are the programs that have taken several generations of seniors out of poverty,” she [Tammy Baldwin] said.

Baldwin noted that Johnson told Breitbart News Daily in an interview earlier this year that he viewed a 12-point plan unveiled by fellow Republican Sen. Rick Scott (Fla.) calling for all federal legislation to sunset after five years as “a positive thing.”

“Not only has he made those references,” Baldwin said, referring to “The Regular Joe Show” podcast. “But back when Rick Scott put out his Republican agenda, which sort of abolished both of them and start over, Sen. Johnson had voiced support for that.”

A Senate Republican strategist said Johnson’s latest comments on Social Security and Medicare are “not good from a campaign perspective.”

Other Senate Republicans are distancing themselves from Johnson’s call for Congress to have more discretionary authority over Medicare and Social Security spending.

Senate Republican Whip John Thune (S.D.) said he did not know of any other Republicans who want to convert Social Security and Medicare to discretionary spending.

One notable exception is Scott, chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, who called for sunsetting all federal legislation in five years as part of his “Rescue America Plan.”

“If a law is worth keeping, Congress can pass it again,” Scott said.

Democrats immediately attacked Scott and tried to tie his plan to Republicans running for the Senate and the House, a tactic made somewhat easier by Scott’s chairmanship of Senate Republicans’ campaign arm.