

WisDems: ICYMI: U.S. Sen. Johnson working overtime for big banks means many Wisconsin workers aren't getting overtime pay

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MADISON, Wis. — Today, [a new report](#) was released detailing Ron Johnson's history of sponsoring legislation that puts his self-serving agenda and big donors first at the expense of Wisconsinites by stripping away their opportunities to earn overtime pay.

UpNorthNews: [Ron Johnson Working Overtime for Big Banks Means Many Wisconsin Workers Aren't Getting Overtime Pay](#)

Key Points:

- During his campaign for re-election, Republican Sen. Ron Johnson has already [taken offense](#) to the notion that his vast increase in personal wealth is connected to his tenure in Congress.
- But as Johnson's 12-year record comes under deeper scrutiny between now and November, he's also likely to find himself on the defensive about how his votes impact other families rather than his own.
- In 2016, the Obama administration introduced a plan to make four million more American workers eligible for overtime pay in an effort to boost workers' incomes and reverse a decades-long slide of the percentage of workers who

could earn more money for more hours.

- Johnson opposed Obama’s plan and [co-sponsored a bill that would have nullified](#) any overtime improvement done through the rulemaking process, instead of navigating an often-un navigable Congress.
- At the time, [polling in Wisconsin](#) showed 81% of voters favored raising the overtime threshold, but banks and businesses did not. Johnson took their side.
- The American Bankers Association (ABA), one of the groups that lobbied against the overtime expansion and in support of Johnson’s bill, called the Obama proposal a “drastic increase [that] will present significant challenges for our members that provide banking services in lower cost-of-living areas of the country, particularly community banks.”
- Johnson called the effort to improve overtime pay “another regulation that will increase costs to businesses, nonprofits and colleges, depress entrepreneurial spirits, and cause negative unintended consequences for employees.”
- Another example that shows where Johnson’s priorities lie came with the now-infamous corporate tax giveaway that Johnson [insisted](#) on before he would support former President Donald Trump’s 2017 tax bill. Despite broad Republican support, [the banking industry expressed concerns](#) that “provisions in the Senate bill could affect our members and our customers, including the treatment of pass-throughs,” a category of corporations that do not have to pay taxes on their profits since the profits pass through directly to the owners who then have to pay individual taxes on them.
- Johnson surprised his colleagues around that time by saying he would oppose the bill [unless the tax break for pass-through companies was made more generous](#).
- The ABA bankers lobby sought and then said it received [reassurance](#) that

many banks would qualify for the higher tax deduction. One year later, [bank profits jumped 44%](#) to a record \$237 billion. A large part of that was credited to the Trump tax bill, with critics saying the tax savings were not passed along to consumers “who are still getting next to nothing on their savings accounts,” Dennis Kelleher of Better Markets, an advocacy group for stronger financial regulations, told [Politico](#).

- The tax break for pass-throughs also benefited Johnson, who later sold his business, Pacur, a pass-through entity, for an amount between \$5 million and \$20 million, according to a statement of economic interest.
- If that wasn't enough, Johnson and bankers also worked together on legislation that would increase the advantage banks have over individuals.
- When Johnson introduced a bill to weaken the power of the head of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) in 2017, the ABA [praised](#) the move as necessary to “reforming the CFPB.”
- The rule was [rescinded during the Trump administration](#), with Johnson voting against consumers and Vice President Mike Pence sealing the deal with a tie breaking 51st vote.
- Johnson would likely defend these proposals as being good economic policies, but who exactly have they been good for?
- Banks have certainly done well over the past decade and have showered some of those profits on Johnson. Between 2010 and March 2022, [records from the Federal Elections Commission](#) show Johnson has received \$60,000 from the ABA's political action committee, BANKPAC. In the wake of the ProPublica report, Johnson [said](#) his legislative actions have “nothing to do with any donor or discussions with them.”
- But Johnson's actions and motivations are likely to be questioned by the Wisconsin families who are unable to author tax breaks that grow their own

bank accounts. Many families remain scarred by losing their homes to foreclosure. Some families may be mystified that a senator would defiantly defend [not lobbying for jobs](#) to come to his own hometown.

- Families are dealing with an infant formula shortage while their senator tries to [blame immigrant babies](#). Some of them own small businesses and watched Johnson [vote against helping thousands of Wisconsin restaurants](#) recover from the pandemic. (“I’m not that fond of restaurants,” he told an interviewer days earlier.)
- Most families don’t have [private jets](#) that help them get around COVID travel fears—fears exacerbated by a sitting US senator spreading [misinformation about vaccines](#), promoting [unsafe animal dewormers](#), and telling people to fight the coronavirus with [mouthwash](#).
- And as families try to weather inflation, they have a senator [praising a plan to raise their taxes](#).
- While he has defied the odds to win twice already, his bid for a third term may depend on overcoming a growing list of reasons to suspect a disconnect between what he’s doing for businesses and banks rather than Wisconsin families and small businesses.