

Sen. Johnson: Hosts “Ramiah Project” roundtable exploring commonsense ideas to remove barriers from incarceration to work

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MADISON – On Friday, U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) hosted a roundtable discussion with a group of leaders across the political spectrum to explore commonsense ideas to remove barriers from incarceration to work. The event was inspired by the senator’s relationship with Ramiah Whiteside, a former inmate turned reform advocate, and the barriers he faced in reentering society. After Ramiah’s tragic passing due to complications of workforce reentry in December of 2022, he left a story that inspired both the senator and so many others in addressing areas such as work release, child support, and fraternization. The event was held in Ramiah’s honor.

During the event, Sen. Johnson [asked](#), “What can we do as a community, as a state, to remove those barriers so we can be supportive of those individuals that want to lead an upstanding life and have that dignity of earning and being successful in life?”

Sen. Johnson stated, “The solution lies here with individuals in our community. And I think an awful lot of the suggestions in terms of how to solve this problem need to be done at a local and a state level. So that’s why it’s really important to have the state legislators here so they understand the challenges facing people who have been incarcerated and who are coming and trying to just turn their lives around.”

Watch the full discussion on Wisconsin Eye [here.](#)

On the three main issues facing incarcerated individuals as they reenter society

“I mean, to the extent we got to do something on the federal level, I want to know. That’s why I was kind of interested in what is being imposed on you, that we can maybe remove that impediment or improve a law or regulation. But primarily this is a state and local issue. And I’m just encouraging the legislators here to work with the secretary. You know, we’ve described three issues here: fraternization – there’s some problems with that, need to be fixed. Child support policies – there are problems with that, need to be fixed. Work release, there’s problems with that, need to be fixed. So again, I realize this is trying to eat an elephant, but let’s take those bites. And, you know, once we’ve done chewing that and swallowing it, let’s take another bite and just, you know, my background in manufacturing, is just continuous improvement. You’re not going to solve all the problems. You’re not going to eat that elephant in one sitting. But let’s be dedicated to eating that elephant.”

On the importance of strong faith and families in building supportive communities

“So, again, the real solution is create an environment in society where people have support before they ever decide to commit a crime, before they ever get incarcerated. You know one thing, and it was never popular, I showed, you know, out-of-wedlock birth rates from the sixties through to today, where, you know, back in the sixties, about 4-8% now it’s societally over 40%. And listen, there’s multiple ways, multiple types of family forms and single parents can do a great job raising great kids. But man, particularly with guys, right. If you’ve got a father in the home trying to provide some discipline, I think we would be in a lot better shape if we had more dads available. This is easy to say, not easy to achieve, but I always talk about the overall solution is renewed faith. And what is so interesting is how many people, you know, even talking here today who have found their salvation. You know, they’ve embraced, you know, our creed and the salvation that it provides, but renewed faith, strong families, in whatever shape that is, a strong family is the foundational building block of any society and then supportive communities, that’s what we’re here for.”