

U.S. Sen. Johnson: Demands transparency from HHS inspector general; calls for investigation into, mishandling of COVID-19 related records

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WASHINGTON – On Monday, U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), ranking member of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, sent a letter to Health and Human Services Inspector General (HHS IG) Christi Grimm calling for an investigation into potential abuses of federal record keeping procedures at HHS and its sub-agencies including the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID).

According to a September 9, 2021 email, Dr. David Morens, a senior NIAID advisor to Dr. Anthony Fauci, emailed his colleagues about his use of a personal email account to evade Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. Dr. Morens wrote that he “[tries] to always communicate on gmail [sic] because [his] NIH email is FOIA’d constantly.” He also noted that he “will delete anything [he doesn’t] want to see in the New York Times.”

Sen. Johnson wrote, “These statements reveal an attempt to limit public access to certain communications directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic, potentially in violation of federal record keeping requirements.”

Sen. Johnson also highlighted another example of the destruction of agency records stemming from a whistleblower allegation that called into question HHS’s compliance with federal record keeping requirements.

The senator's office had previously requested a briefing from HHS IG on the steps it has taken or will take to investigate or review recent allegations of record mishandling and destruction. The IG's office refused to provide any information about investigative steps connected to Dr. Morens' apparent use of a personal email for official agency business.

"Dr. Morens' actions are serious and Congress must know whether your office is going to take appropriate action to investigate this apparent wrongdoing. Therefore, because of your office's lack of transparency and failure to provide my office with any information on this matter, I write to request the OIG to investigate NIH and NIAID's handling of federal records," **the senator added.**

The full letter can be found [here](#).

Read more about the senator's August 14, 2023 letter to Inspector General Grimm in the [New York Post](#).