

U.S. Sen. Johnson: Joins 38 GOP Senators in demanding changes to Biden Administration rule endangering safety and wellbeing of unaccompanied alien children

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WASHINGTON – On Monday, U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), joined U.S. Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), and 38 of their Senate GOP colleagues in a letter calling on the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) to overhaul its harmful and deficient policies governing the agency's treatment of unaccompanied alien children in the United States. ORR's [Proposed Rule](#)—parts of which the agency is already enforcing—allows ORR to place vulnerable children in the custody of poorly vetted, and potentially criminal, sponsors and obstructs whistleblowers from reporting abuse in the program to Congress. This letter comes one year after Sen. Johnson [first wrote](#) to HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra about the [disturbing whistleblower account](#) of HHS employee Tara Lee Rodas regarding the department's handling of the Unaccompanied Children Program.

“This Proposed Rule ignores nearly seven years of oversight conducted by Congress and the Office of Inspector General and reveals chronic foot-dragging—if not total reluctance—when it comes to protecting vulnerable children,” **the senators wrote**. “It provides ample protections to government bureaucrats at the expense of children. Even more concerning, ‘the requirements being [adopted] in this proposed rule are already enforced by [the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)].”

“...ORR does not even consider a sponsor's criminal record, current illegal drug use,

history of abuse or neglect, or other child welfare concerns ‘necessarily disqualifying to potential sponsorship.’... In effect, ORR accepts a sponsor’s representations almost entirely on face value,” **the senators continued.**

“ORR’s Proposed Rule abdicates the agency’s responsibility for protecting the vulnerable children in its custody from harmful behavior by poorly vetted, potential criminals. For these services, the taxpayer paid ORR \$5.5 billion in FY2022. The Proposed Rule is wholly unworkable and ORR should discard it and its current practices. If not, Congress will have no choice but to introduce a resolution of disapproval under the *Congressional Review Act*,” **the senators concluded.**

Sens. Johnson and Grassley are joined in this letter by Senators Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.V.), Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.), Markwayne Mullin (R-Okla.), Ted Cruz (R-Texas), Bill Hagerty (R-Tenn.), Tim Scott (R-S.C.), Pete Ricketts (R-Neb.), Rick Scott (R-Fla.), Mike Lee (R-Utah), Cynthia Lummis (R-Wyo.), Eric Schmitt (R-Mo.), Katie Britt (R-Ala.), Joni Ernst (R-Iowa), Mike Braun (R-Ind.), Thom Tillis (R-N.C.), J.D. Vance (R-Ohio), Roger Marshall, M.D. (R-Kan.), Mike Rounds (R-S.D.), Ted Budd (R-N.C.), James Lankford (R-Okla.), Steve Daines (R-Mont.), John Kennedy (R-La.), Deb Fischer (R-Neb.), John Hoeven (R-N.D.), Jim Risch (R-Idaho.), John Thune (R-S.D.), John Cornyn (R-Texas), Josh Hawley (R-Mo.), Todd Young (R-Ind.), Mike Crapo (R-Idaho.), Tom Cotton (R-Ark.), Kevin Cramer (R-N.D.), Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), John Barrasso, M.D. (R-Wyo.), Tommy Tuberville (R-Ala.) and Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.).

Read more about the senators’ December 4, 2023 letter to the Office of Refugee Resettlement in the [Washington Examiner](#).