

Written by WisDems Press, Philip Shulman  
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**MADISON, Wis.** – Throughout 2021 Ron Johnson’s top priority was spreading controversial and often flat out false statements in an effort to avoid having to explain his record of failure to Wisconsin. See below for a roundup from The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel of Johnson’s most out of touch and controversial statements:

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: [Bice: U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson's 10 most controversial statements of 2021](#)

It was the year of U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, unleashed.

[...]

Johnson began airing his opinions on a wide range of issues — questioning everything from COVID-19 vaccines to the Jan. 6 insurrection and the reality of climate change. And he kept doing it. Before long, his words became a regular feature on influential conservative news sites and late-night TV shows.

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## 1. Questioning COVID-19 vaccinations.

"We all hoped and prayed the vaccines would be 100% effective, 100% safe," Johnson said just this week on Fox News Primetime. "But they're not. We now know that fully vaccinated individuals can catch Covid, they can transmit Covid. So what's the point?"

It didn't take long for the medical establishment to take note that Johnson failed to mention the fact that vaccinations greatly reduce the risk of hospitalization or death.

"I'd say that he's so misguided that it makes me wonder whether this is all just an act," responded Jonathan Reiner, the medical analyst for CNN. "And if this is not an act, then he is just the most ignorant man in the United States Senate. And that says a lot."

## 2. Downplaying the Jan. 6 Capitol attack.

"This didn't seem like an armed insurrection to me," the Oshkosh Republican said in a February radio interview.

"I mean 'armed,' when you hear 'armed,' don't you think of firearms? Here's the questions I would have liked to ask. How many firearms were confiscated? How many shots were fired? I'm only aware of one and I'll defend that law enforcement officer for taking that shot. It was a tragedy, OK? But I think there was only one."

In truth, police recovered a dozen guns and thousands of rounds of ammunition from seven people who were arrested over their involvement in the Jan. 6 riot that left at least five people dead, according to NBC News.

## 3. Denying climate change.

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"I don't know about you guys, but I think climate change is — as Lord Monckton said — bullshit," Johnson said in June, mouthing the expletive while referring to British climate change skeptic Lord Christopher Monckton. "By the way, it is."

[...]

#### 4. Calling Social Security a 'Ponzi scheme.'

"These things are Ponzi schemes; the money isn't there," Johnson told a Milwaukee radio show in November. "You invest it — whether it's Social Security or whatever — and the federal government spends it, and they just put in place another government bond. There isn't money. There aren't assets backing up these trust funds."

[...]

#### 5. Questioning 'the big push' to get everyone vaccinated for coronavirus.

In an April interview with a conservative talk radio host, Johnson said he saw “no reason to be pushing vaccines on people,” arguing that their distribution should be “limited” to those most vulnerable to coronavirus.

“If you have a vaccine, quite honestly, what do you care if your neighbor has one or not?” he asked.

But Johnson had a different message six months earlier when he accused then-Sen. Kamala Harris of casting doubts on vaccines. Harris had said in a vice-presidential debate that she would not trust the safety and effectiveness of a COVID-19 vaccine solely on the word of then-President Donald Trump.

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"That'd be a terrible thing if we have an effective vaccine and a safe one, and that's the only one we'll release," Johnson said in November 2020. "But if you are out there undermining that possibility, that will cause people's deaths."

6. Defending his work to secure tax breaks for his billionaire campaign backers.

"As someone who spent 31 years building a successful manufacturing company in Wisconsin, I have long said that our tax system needs to be simplified and rationalized," Johnson said in August.

[...]

According to Pro Publica, Johnson lobbied then-President Donald Trump to sweeten the tax break for companies known as pass-throughs in Trump's 2017 tax cut bill.

The change resulted in \$79 million in tax savings in 2018 for two of Johnson's biggest donors — Richard and Elizabeth Uihlein, owners of packaging giant Uline in Pleasant Prairie, and Diane Hendricks, head of ABC Supply in Beloit.

7. Accusing Anthony Fauci of 'overhyping' COVID-19 and AIDS.

"Fauci did the exact same thing with AIDS," Johnson said of the president's chief medical adviser's statements on COVID's omicron variant in early December. "He overhyped it. He created all kinds of fear, saying it could affect the entire population when it couldn't. He's using the exact same playbook with COVID, ignoring therapy, pushing a vaccine."

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8. Claiming the top 1% are paying their 'fair share.'

"The top 1% owns about 20% of the nation's assets," the multimillionaire businessman told a truck driver during an October town hall. "But they pay 40% of the nation's income tax. I mean, at some point in time, we got to go, 'Well, it's probably pretty close to a fair share.' So I'm not into punitive taxation, I'm into fair."

In June, Pro Publica reported that a review of Internal Revenue Service records showed the richest 25 people in the country paid a true tax rate of just 3.4%. The online publication also said many billionaires were paying at a lower rate than the average person making \$45,000.

9. Peddling Listerine as treatment for COVID-19.

"Standard gargle, mouthwash, has been proven to kill the coronavirus," Johnson said at a town hall earlier this month. "If you get it, you may reduce viral replication. Why not try all these things?"

[...]

In the past, he has touted the use of the antiparasitic drug ivermectin, questioned the use of ventilators for COVID patients, suggested vaccinated Americans could be perpetuating the coronavirus pandemic and claimed distributing vaccines during a pandemic "could be dangerous."

10. Asserting that he never felt threatened by rioters on Jan. 6.

"Even though those thousands of people that were marching to the Capitol were trying to pressure people like me to vote the way they wanted me to vote, I knew those were people that love this country, that truly respect law enforcement, would never do anything to break the law, and so I wasn't concerned," Johnson told conservative talk show host Joe Pags in March.

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But Johnson said he might have felt differently if the march had been led by Black Lives Matter.

"Now, had the tables been turned — Joe, this could get me in trouble — had the tables been turned, and President Trump won the election and those were tens of thousands of Black Lives Matter and Antifa protesters, I might have been a little concerned," Johnson concluded.

A week later, the Wisconsin senator said there was "no violence" on the Senate side of the U.S. Capitol during the insurrection.

[...]