

# U.S. Sen. Johnson: “These families have a very simple request: they want to be seen, their stories heard. They would like to be believed”

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**OSHKOSH** – On Monday, U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) held a press conference in Milwaukee with families from across the country who shared their experiences regarding adverse reactions to Covid-19 vaccines and how the medical community and federal health agencies have repeatedly ignored their concerns. The senator also spoke of his advocacy for early treatment and the importance of American’s health care freedom. The senator previously held two Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs hearings on early treatment in [November](#) and [December](#) of 2020.

Highlights from the press conference are below. Full video may be viewed [here](#). [Video](#) and graphs presented by Sen. Johnson available [here](#).

Sen. Johnson:

*“I do want to be clear at the outset, to a person, we are all pro-vaccine. Personally, I’ve had every flu shot since at least the swine flu. I’m current in all of my other vaccines. I was a huge supporter of Operation Warp Speed. I’m happy to acknowledge that over 300 million doses of the vaccine have been given to the U.S., and for most people, the vast majority of people, the vaccine has been administered with little or no side effects. And I personally believe the vaccine has saved countless lives, and I personally believe this vaccine has contributed to the end of the pandemic, which is what everybody in the world wants.”*

*“What’s been happening over the last year and a half is people that are trying to tell the truth, people that are trying to get answers, are having a hard time getting their truths communicated without being vilified, without being ridiculed, without being censored. And I think that’s the general experience of the people in this group that are going to be talking to you today.”*

*“I’ll just say: I for one believe them. I don’t know how anybody can listen to these stories and at least not take them seriously. I understand — we all want this pandemic to be over. We’re all hoping that there was that silver bullet to end it ... to downplay what’s happening to our fellow human beings, that small minority that are suffering severe symptoms. ... But the first step in solving any problem, and I view this as a problem, is admitting you have one. And I*

*think unfortunately, because of that desire to end this pandemic, I think too many people in the medical establishment and our federal health agencies are if not completely ignoring, certainly downplaying what is happening.”*

Ken Ruetters:

*“They reached out to their local politicians. They tried contacting the drug companies. And without response. They often used the term ‘I feel ghosted.’ So, without a voice, and with the daily growing population that were experiencing these reactions, and their frustration without being heard, or seen, or recognized or believed. I mean, they didn’t even have a chance to be believed because nobody responded.”*

*“They are pro-vaccine, as Senator Johnson said. We’re pro-vaccine. And they think we can be pro-vaccine, attack this pandemic, get through this pandemic, and get taken care of and be heard. They think we can do both. That sounds reasonable to me. Many in the group, especially in the first few weeks, are doctors, nurses, mental health professionals, because they were taking, they were in the first rollout, and they’re pro-science, right? We have an electrical engineer, a dental hygienist, my wife’s working on her master’s in counseling. Bri and her husband who’s a PhD in chemistry. Candice, who’s a PhD.”*

Sheryl Ruetters:

*“My neurological symptoms have left me barely able to function some days, and the internal tremors create a type of fatigue that I have never experienced before. I am unable to fully participate in the activities I enjoyed before being vaccinated. My life has been negatively altered as a result of my vaccine. Will I get better? Will I develop Parkinson’s or MS or ALS or another neuro-degenerative disease? I don’t know, and my doctors can’t tell me if they know. So what do I want? I want our neurological injuries to be recognized and acknowledged by the CDC and the FDA.”*

*“I’m pro-vaccine, I’m definitely pro-science, but I’m also pro informed consent, and these vaccine injuries are real, but people don’t know. People need to understand that these reactions exist, and they need to be researched.”*

Candace Hayden:

*“Before this, I was healthy. I was active and self-sufficient. I fear my diminished quality of life is my new normal. Will I ever run again? Will I ever ride my bike? I would give anything to get in my car and just drive it. My greatest fear is for others like Maddie, the children, those that are younger that don’t have a voice, that can’t tell you how they’re feeling, that don’t understand why their legs are no longer working. I am pro-vaccine, I am pro-science, and I understand the vaccine is for the greater good. However, I also understand that we represent a small portion experiencing negative side effects. We trusted science and we did our part.”*

*“We are asking to be seen, we are asking to be heard, and we are asking to be believed.”*

Kristi Dobbs:

*“Today, the medical community still remains baffled and unable to restore my health. I’m scared and frightened for my future so I do have hope and this is why I’m here today, speaking out. This is not an easy thing to do, guys, but I hope that our conditions will be researched and studied. I hope that we can find a solution and a pathway to health. That’s all we want. I would give anything, I would give my whole life savings if I could go back to January 17<sup>th</sup> and never to have had the experiences of my life. ... We just want you guys to believe that this is real. We are real Americans, we are real people experiencing these side effects. So, I thank you for giving just that today.”*

Brianne Dressen:

*“I am a strong supporter of science and I’ve always believed in the importance of vaccines. I was so confident in this that I enrolled in the Phase 3 clinical trial, here in the United States for AstraZeneca. Within minutes of my first shot, I felt tingling down my arm and by that evening my vision had become blurry and sound became distorted and I developed hyperacusis, which is a sensitivity to sound. ... Within 48 hours I landed into the ER, the first of many visits. My sensitivity to light and sound became so severe that I had to be confined to my bedroom alone in darkness in silence.”*

*“This is us. We are part of the full picture. Please do not erase us. Please do not make us invisible. To the media, we need your help to start the conversation. To help us end the stigma surrounding the term, ‘COVID vaccine reaction.’ To the CDC and FDA, we desperately need you to communicate with the medical community, what is happening. To our elected officials, we need help getting momentum for research, for early intervention strategies, so that when these patients do arrive in the ERs and hospitals, physicians will be equipped with the knowledge and tools to help us. To the medical community and to research institutions, please help us. Please hear us. Please believe us.”*

The list of participants is below.

**Ken Ruettgers**, a former Green Bay Packers offensive lineman, and his wife, **Sheryl**, who received the Moderna vaccine in January 2021. Four days after receiving the first dose, Sheryl experienced severe neurological reactions that still inhibit her ability to live a normal life, including muscle pain, numbness, weakness and paresthesia.

**Stephanie de Garay** is a mother from Cincinnati, Ohio, whose 13-year-old daughter, **Maddie**, participated in the Pfizer Covid vaccine trial in December 2020 and January 2021. After Maddie received her second dose of the vaccine, she experienced severe side effects that resulted in multiple hospitalizations.

**Kristi Dobbs** is a dental hygienist from Webb City, Missouri, who received the Pfizer Covid vaccine in January 2021. Since her vaccination, she has experienced multiple severe side effects, including pain, paresthesia and heart palpitations.

**Brianne Dressen** is a preschool teacher from Saratoga Springs, Utah, who received the Astra Zeneca Covid vaccine during a clinical trial in November 2020. She has since experienced extensive adverse effects from the vaccine that has resulted in a medical bill of over \$250,000.

**Candace Hayden** is from Detroit, Michigan, and received both doses of the Moderna vaccine in March 2021. In April, she suffered from paresthesia and partial paralysis from the chest down, which lead to a month-long hospital stay and weeks of physical therapy.