

**Opening Statement of Ranking Member Ron Johnson**  
**Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations**  
**February 6, 2024**

*As submitted to the record:*

Since the start of this Subcommittee’s investigation into the framework agreement between the PGA Tour and the Saudi Arabian Public Investment Fund (PIF), I have been concerned that our intrusion into delicate negotiations could make it even more difficult for professional golf to create a structure that would allow the best players to regularly compete against each other at the highest level. Fortunately, we have not had a public hearing on this subject since last September, allowing the PGA Tour to pursue this goal with minimal interference. It now appears some progress has been made.

Last Wednesday, the PGA Tour announced that it was partnering with Strategic Sports Group (SSG) which will invest up to \$3 billion into a new commercial venture under the PGA Tour’s control. But divisions between the PGA Tour and LIV Golf remain and discussions between the two entities are still ongoing. Some public reports indicate that a final agreement could occur before the Masters Tournament in April, while other reports indicate the deal is currently on “life support.” Until a formal decision is reached between the two parties, I remained concerned that any Congressional oversight of the matter may do more harm than good.

That said, as Ranking Member, I not only acknowledge but must also defend the Subcommittee’s constitutional authority to investigate a broad range of issues and entities. Using that authority Chairman Blumenthal chose to continue this Subcommittee’s inquiry into the PIF and its U.S. business dealings. PSI sent information requests to the PIF, subpoenaed the PIF’s U.S. subsidiary—USSA International LLC—and eventually subpoenaed the PIF’s four U.S.-based consultants following the Subcommittee’s attempts to obtain records voluntarily.

Unfortunately, due to Saudi Arabia’s claims of sovereign immunity and Saudi court rulings, the consultants have been constrained in what documents they believe they can provide. It is my understanding that all four firms here today are facing litigation instigated by the PIF in Saudi court. The firms claim that by producing certain records to the Subcommittee, their employees would be in violation of Saudi law and could face severe consequences. That is a very serious reality that this Subcommittee must consider as it proceeds with this inquiry.

I do have sympathy for the position the consultants find themselves in, but I have no sympathy for Saudi claims of sovereign immunity in this inquiry. Any foreign entity wishing to do business in the U.S. must comply with U.S. law and be responsive to Congressional subpoenas.

That is why I chose to join Chairman Blumenthal on follow-up letters to the consultants calling for full compliance with the Subcommittee’s subpoenas. To be clear, conducting oversight of the PIF is not my top priority, but I am supportive of preserving PSI’s oversight prerogatives and responsibilities.

PSI is the Senate's chief investigative body which is why it is armed with the power to compel the production of records. If PSI's ability to access records weakens, then the power of this Subcommittee will be reduced and Congressional oversight will atrophy further.

As a result, Mr. Chairman, I joined you on your follow-up letters to these consultants and the PIF because I believe in defending PSI's authorities and access to records. I hope you will similarly support my efforts to obtain records that PSI is entitled to receive.

Toward the end of last year, I sent you two letters totaling 30 pages detailing the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) failure to respond to my oversight requests on the origins of COVID-19 and the development, distribution, and safety of the COVID-19 vaccines. I asked that you subpoena HHS for records and information contained in my more than 50 outstanding requests, including 50 specific pages of Dr. Fauci's records and the empirical Bayesian analysis of VAERS data that HHS uses as a surveillance tool to assess the safety of COVID-19 vaccines. Some of these outstanding requests are nearly three years old. This Subcommittee cannot allow taxpayer-funded agencies to obstruct Congressional oversight intended to obtain information that every American has the right to see. I hope you will join me as I have joined you in defending PSI's oversight prerogatives and, together, demanding full compliance with the Subcommittee's requests.

I thank the witnesses for complying with the bipartisan request to appear at today's hearing.