STATE AFFAIRS
WISPOLITICS
Wisconsin's Premier Political News Service

Sen. Johnson: Ernst Whistleblower Protection bill signed by President

Posted on Thursday, Oct 26, 2017

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. Get the app or access via desktop.

Contact:
Ben Voelkel (Johnson)
Brook Hougesen (Ernst)

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senators Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, and Joni Ernst (R-Iowa), a combat veteran, issued the following statements after President Trump signed into law the Dr. Chris Kirkpatrick Whistleblower Protection Act:

Sen. Johnson: “Chris Kirkpatrick did the right and honorable thing when he raised concerns about the over-prescription of opioids to veterans. Today we are sending a strong message that federal whistleblowers like Chris deserve protection, and attempts to intimidate or silence whistleblowers are unlawful. I thank Sen. Ernst and Rep. Duffy for their work with me on this important issue, and I thank the president for signing this important legislation to protect veterans and whistleblowers across the federal government.”

Sen. Ernst: “I’m thrilled to see our whistleblower protection legislation signed into law today. Whistleblowers who bravely come forward about mistreatment or corruption at the VA must be protected. This legislation will work to safeguard those who report these wrongdoings, while holding the offenders and retaliators accountable for their actions. I’m grateful for Senator Johnson’s leadership on this bill and look forward to continuing efforts to protect whistleblowers and improve care for our veterans.”

The bill is named for Dr. Chris Kirkpatrick, a whistleblower at the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Tomah, Wis., who took his own life after being

fired for questioning excessive prescription practices at the facility. Dr. Kirkpatrick's brother, Sean, testified at a Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee hearing in September 2015 about the retaliation his brother faced. Last year, Chairman Johnson released a report detailing the systemic failures at the Department of Veterans Affairs and VA Office of Inspector General that led to the tragedies at the Tomah VA.

This bill is a direct result of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee's investigation. It also implements a number of suggestions that Sean Kirkpatrick and others have made to improve whistleblower protections at the VA and across the federal government. The legislation will strengthen penalties on those who retaliate against whistleblowers, add protections for probationary employees, and ensure that federal employees have a greater knowledge of whistleblower protections.