

Speaker Ryan: Talks today's vote on VA reform during leadership presser

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Today, the House will act on the years-long scandals and problems plaguing the VA by voting on bipartisan legislation to [improve the care our veterans receive](#). Speaker Ryan discussed the bill's significance at a press conference with Republican leaders:

"I want to commend Chairman Roe, I want to commend Chairman Wenstrup, and all the Republicans and Democrats who have come together to advance this legislation. This has been a long time coming.

"Any of you who have reported on this scandal over the last few years know how entrenched the problems at the Veterans [Affairs Department] really are. This legislation is one of, if not the biggest step we have taken to turn this page. Because we have many veterans who are not only waiting for care—we have a lot of veterans who are waiting for answers. They are waiting for some recognition—any recognition—that they are being heard. But instead of listening, we have had a bureaucracy that is ignoring problems, creating waiting lists, [and] avoiding accountability.

"At the Tomah VA in Tomah, Wisconsin, the chief of staff—who patients called the 'Candy Man.' He was called the Candy Man because he was distributing all these narcotics he was prescribing—he got a \$4,000 bonus. This came after an investigation uncovered that he was overprescribing. And it was after Jason Simcakoski, a patient at Tomah, died from a fatal overdose. By the way, the pharmacist at Tomah? He got a bonus also that year.

“The VA needs real reform, and this bill helps get that done. With this legislation, Secretary Shulkin will have the tools that he needs to deliver the kinds of changes that our veterans have been demanding. And most fundamentally, it will show our veterans that when we say that we are a grateful nation, we mean it.”

“So we look forward to sending this major bipartisan legislation to the president’s desk. We’ve been talking about this for about three years. And we uncovered all the scandals at the VA. Now we’re making law. Now we’re bringing accountability. Now we’re getting the veterans the kind of response and the kind of accountability they earned and deserved. And I’m very proud of these members who worked across the aisle to get this done.”