

State GOP criticizes Baldwin on committee change

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The state GOP is criticizing U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin for leaving a Senate committee that's investigated drug abuse at the Tomah VA.

Baldwin, D-Madison, is no longer on the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. The committee, chaired by Republican U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, investigated the issue and wrote a report on it last year, saying the over-prescriptions resulted in the deaths of at least two veterans.

A separate Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs generally handles veterans issues, and neither Johnson nor Baldwin are on that committee.

Republicans have previously slammed Baldwin for not taking action right away when her office first received information on the topic.

Baldwin announced last year she was staying on the Appropriations Committee and the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions. But instead of staying on Johnson's committee, she's now joined the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation.

Baldwin said that would help her advocate for rural broadband investments and ensure some of the state's key industries "have strong transportation infrastructure to ship their goods to market."

She's announced several efforts this month aimed at helping veterans. That includes a bill she co-authored with North Carolina Republican Thom Tillis that looks to boost employment rates, a letter asking the feds to let university staff streamline the veteran student data collection process and a bill to help Navy Vietnam War veterans get benefits if they were exposed to Agent Orange.

But Alec Zimmerman, a state GOP spokesman, said Baldwin has "embraced the Washington status quo and fled her responsibilities to solve the problem."

"Senator Baldwin's decision to run from her failures rather than stand up for

Wisconsin's veterans is shameful," he said.