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U.S. Sen. Johnson: House passes Johnson whistleblower protection bill

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Washington, D.C. — U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, said this after the House of Representatives passed the Dr. Chris Kirkpatrick Whistleblower Protection Act Thursday.

"I am pleased the House passed the Dr. Chris Kirkpatrick Whistleblower Protection Act today, moving us one step closer to better protecting federal whistleblowers and providing better health care to the finest among us – our veterans. Future whistleblowers who take a risk to expose wrongdoing and waste in the federal government deserve the respect and support of our nation. I urge the president to quickly sign these important reforms into law."

The bill passed the Senate earlier this year and now heads to the president's desk for his signature. It is named for Dr. Chris Kirkpatrick, a whistleblower from 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, the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs committee 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 committee's investigation, while also implementing 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 for those who retaliate against whistleblowers, add protections for probationary employees, and ensure that federal employees have a greater knowledge of

whistleblower protections.