

Vukmir campaign: Tammy Baldwin knew about Tomah and kept it to herself

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Brookfield, Wis. — After receiving a constituent complaint notifying her about a looming opioid prescription crisis at the Tomah VA, Senator Tammy Baldwin requested an investigation and kept the troublesome findings to herself instead of addressing the problem. Baldwin also denied a plea from VA whistleblower Ryan Honl to make the report public that would've spurred action.

"Senator Baldwin let our veterans down when she kept the report about the problems at the Tomah VA to herself and did nothing to address the situation," said Leah Vukmir campaign manager Jess Ward. "Rather than making the findings public and demanding action for our veterans, Baldwin put politics first and chose to shield President Obama's VA and herself from criticism."

BACKGROUND ...

April 7, 2014 - Baldwin wrote to the Tomah VA Medical Director after receiving a constituent complaint, but she was told everything was fine. Baldwin later asked the VA and VA Inspector General for an investigation. "Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, responding to a constituent's complaint about opiate prescriptions in Tomah, writes to Tomah VA Medical Director Mario DeSanctis. He assures her everything is fine.

The senator later writes to the VA and the VA inspector general asking for an investigation.” ([USA Today](#), 3/17/15)

August 29, 2014 - The VA Inspector General sent Baldwin a copy of their previously unreleased report. Baldwin then forwarded the report to the constituent and stopped pressing the matter. “The VA inspector general provides Baldwin with a copy of the previously unreleased report. She turns it over to the constituent and apparently drops the matter.” ([USA Today](#), 3/17/15)

August 30, 2014 - Marine Veteran, Jason Simcakoski, Died From An Overdose As An Inpatient At The Tomah VA. “Marine Corps veteran Jason Simcakoski, 35, dies from an overdose as an inpatient at the Tomah VA Medical Center. Two days earlier, Tomah practitioners decided to add another opiate to the 14 drugs he was already prescribed. The cause of death was ‘mixed drug toxicity.’” ([USA Today](#), 3/17/15)

September 26, 2014 - Ryan Honl an employee at the Tomah facility, sent a letter to VA Secretary Robert McDonald, Senator Baldwin, Senator Johnson and Congressman Kind expressing concerns about opiate prescriptions and patient health and safety. “An employee at the Tomah facility, Ryan Honl, sends messages to VA Secretary Robert McDonald, Kind, and Baldwin expressing concerns he heard from current and former employees about opiate prescriptions. He also sends a message to Sen. Ron Johnson noting he had ‘grave concerns’ about ‘patient health and safety.’” ([USA Today](#), 3/17/15)

October 14, 2014 - Ryan Honl, the Tomah VA whistleblower, resigned from his job. “Honl resigns from his job at the Tomah facility and begins peppering the officials he first contacted with emails about problems at the medical center.” ([USA Today](#), 3/17/15)

November 11, 2014 - Honl learned about an inspection report that Baldwin’s office had a copy of and after getting a copy of the report, Honl repeatedly contacted Baldwin’s office calling for an investigation and to make the report public, but Baldwin did not. “Honl learns from a friend about the existence of the inspection report and that Baldwin’s office has a copy. He later persuaded the friend to get him a copy. After reading it, he barraged Baldwin’s office with emails for several weeks asking that she call for an investigation and make the report public. She did not.” ([USA Today](#), 3/17/15)

December 2014 - When Baldwin’s office still had not taken action, Honl sent a

message to her staffer with the subject line: “final plea for help from Senator Baldwin.” “In them the whistleblower — former Tomah VA employee Ryan Honl — asked that Baldwin call for an investigation, that she push colleagues on the Veterans Affairs committee to take action, and that she help bring the issues in the report to public attention. The report had not been made public, but Baldwin’s office received a copy in August. When she still had not taken public action in December, Honl sent a message to her staffer with the subject line: ‘Final plea for Help from Senator Baldwin.’ ‘All we ask is that our senator publicly support our desire to have an open forum rather than remain silent publicly, which is what the VA does in hiding reports from the public,’ Honl wrote.” ([The Green Bay Press-Gazette](#), 1/19/15)