

WisGOP: Tammy Baldwin tried to silence staffer after Tomah VA controversy

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[Madison, WI] — Tammy Baldwin hired Hillary Clinton’s fixer attorney and tried to silence a former member of her staff with a severance package after Baldwin mishandled the opioid crisis at the Tomah VA. Now Leah Vukmir is working to hold Baldwin accountable for failing Wisconsin’s heroes.

Read the full story from the *Washington Free Beacon* [here](#), or find excerpts below.

GOP Candidate Criticizes Baldwin’s Handling of VA Controversy

The Washington Free Beacon

Joe Schoffstall

September 13, 2018

Sen. Tammy Baldwin’s (D., Wis.) Republican challenger criticized the incumbent for ignoring abuses at a VA facility and for offering a severance package to a staffer fired over the incident that would have required her to remain quiet if she accepted.

“Senator Baldwin let our veterans down and fired a high-ranking staffer in her office in an attempt to shift the blame onto someone else,” said Jess Ward, Leah Vukmir’s campaign manager. “Then after the fact, she attempted to bribe her staffer to keep her quiet. Senator Baldwin should be ashamed of her unwillingness to take responsibility for her own failures—all to protect her political career.”

A memo first began circulating in 2009 warning of the dangerous amounts of narcotics being handed out to veterans at the Tomah VA facility by its chief of staff, Dr. David Houlihan, who was known as the “Candy Man.” Workers at the facility were fearful of speaking out over fear of losing their jobs.

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Baldwin, who was elected in 2012, was the only member of Congress from Wisconsin to receive an inspector general report in 2014 detailing the abuses at the Tomah VA facility. Baldwin did not act on the report until months later after a Marine had died from an overdose.

Marquette Baylor, a former deputy state director for Baldwin, was then fired after fallout over the controversy. Baylor was offered a severance package if she were to sign a confidentiality agreement on the matter, which she refused.

Marc Elias, a partner at the D.C. office of the Perkins Coie law firm known as the “go-to fixer” for Democrats in trouble, was brought in to help Baldwin weather the storm.

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Republicans began making Baldwin’s inaction over the Tomah VA an issue in the state last year. Liberal groups responded by running ads defending the first-term Democratic senator.

One such group to run ads in defense of Baldwin was the Washington, D.C.-based Majority Forward. The group made the ads in conjunction with VoteVets, a progressive veterans group.

Majority Forward was incorporated in 2015 by Elias, the lawyer brought in to help Baldwin with crisis control, the Free Beacon previously reported.

Majority Forward additionally shared staff and office space with the Senate Majority PAC, the largest PAC dedicated to electing and keeping Democrats in the Senate. The Senate Majority PAC has given millions to VoteVets, the second group that defended Baldwin over her record.

Read the full story [here](#).