

U.S. Sen. Johnson: To Tomah, Madison VAMC: Stop pushing people out of work over vaccine mandates

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WASHINGTON—On Friday, U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) sent a letter to Karen Long and John Rohrer, the directors of the Tomah, Wisconsin and Madison, Wisconsin Veterans Affairs Medical Centers (VAMC), respectively, regarding the COVID-19 vaccine mandate. Following Sen. Johnson's April 13, 2022 letter to the Milwaukee VAMC, several employees at the Tomah and Madison VAMCs contacted the senator's office to express similar concerns about the coercive vaccine mandate.

The senator wrote, "As I noted in my letter to the Milwaukee VAMC, we now know that individuals who are fully vaccinated can contract and spread COVID-19. That is what the 'science' tells us without dispute. Even Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Rochelle Walensky acknowledges this fact. Given the vaccines' inability to prevent infection and spread, the COVID-19 vaccine mandates are pointless and destructive. The Milwaukee, Madison and Tomah VAMC employees that reached out to my office fear that the facilities' coercive vaccine mandate will cause staff shortages and directly effect patient care. I share those legitimate concerns."

The full text of the letter can be found [here](#) and below.

April 22, 2022

John J. Rohrer

Director

William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital

2500 Overlook Terrace

Madison, WI 53705

Karen Long MSN, RN

Director

Tomah VA Medical Center

500 East Veterans Street

Tomah, WI 54660

Dear Directors Rohrer and Long:

Last week, I wrote to the Milwaukee Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) regarding employees expressing concerns about the facility's COVID-19 vaccine mandate.[1] Since I sent that letter, my office has heard from employees from your facilities raising similar concerns about the vaccine mandate.

Specifically, employees at both facilities stated that they will no longer be able to receive medical or religious exemptions from the vaccine mandate. Just like their colleagues in the Milwaukee VAMC, these employees fear that they may lose their jobs unless they adhere to the coercive mandate.

As I noted in my letter to the Milwaukee VAMC, we now know that individuals who are fully vaccinated can contract and spread COVID-19. That is what the "science" tells us without dispute. Even Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Rochelle Walensky acknowledges this fact. Given the vaccines' inability to prevent infection and spread, the COVID-19 vaccine mandates are pointless and destructive. The Milwaukee, Madison and Tomah VAMC employees that reached out to my office fear that the facilities' coercive vaccine mandate will cause staff shortages and directly effect patient care. I share those legitimate concerns.

In order to better understand how the Madison and Tomah VAMCs are addressing

employees' concerns about the COVID-19 vaccine mandate, I request you immediately provide my office with a briefing on the matter and the following information:

1. How many COVID-19 vaccine exemptions have been granted for Madison and Tomah VAMC employees?
2. How many requests for exemptions have been denied?
3. What is the purpose of requiring COVID-19 vaccination if it cannot prevent infection and spread?
4. As an alternative to vaccination, will your facilities offer weekly COVID-19 testing to employees or test for natural immunity? If not, please explain why.

Please provide the briefing and this information as soon as possible but no later than May 6, 2022. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Ron Johnson

United States Senator

cc: Ms. Victoria P. Brahm

Network Director

VA Great Lakes Health Care System

The Honorable Michael J. Missal

Inspector General

Department of Veterans Affairs

The Honorable Denis McDonough

Secretary

Department of Veterans Affairs