

Signed by vets, workers who care for them and supporters.

October 3, 2016

Senator Ron Johnson,

We, the veterans served and workers at the VA are against the privatization of the VA. Further, research and polling shows that privatization would not solve the problems of the VA nor would they benefit the veterans. We urge you to STOP your campaign to privatize the VA.

First, here is our report from Vote Vets.org on your voting record for supporting veterans. How have you actually supported veterans, Senator Johnson? As veterans, we are very disappointed.

Gregory West 44 YEAR PATIENT AT ZABLOCKI VA MEDICAL CENTER  
Fred Vandusen (work)  
Lyle Schmitt  
Lynn Smith

Tom M. Dickson  
John Klaus, Sr.  
Raul Hernandez  
Tim "THAT" Micho  
Paul Tommering  
Jeff Doc Dentice

KATHLEEN WILCZAK  
KATHLEEN FULCIDE  
Eileen From - Jane and I  
Gregory

Carl A. Brown IBEW 494  
Tom Hill VAW Wisconsin

Christopher Patebaal  
-local 578  
Guzal A Gillo  
AFGE

Scott Deib OACMIA  
Thomas D Coyne

Dana Jones, AFGE  
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John Pommann  
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Dan Zukowicz  
Nicholas Lybell  
Joe Hernandez Liden

Chris Gulabowski 732ND MIBN

Jim Brown  
Walt R. Blad  
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## **SENATOR JOHNSON'S VOTING RECORD FAILS VETERANS, JOHNSON'S POLICY PROPOSALS WOULD HURT VETERANS MORE**

### **2014: AFTER SCANDALS SURFACED OVER SCHEDULING AND VA HOSPITALS, JOHNSON REFUSED TO INCREASE FUNDING, REFORM VA**

#### **2014: Johnson Was One Of Only Three Senators To Vote Against Funding And Reform Of The VA Health System – Because It Cost Too Much**

**Johnson “Defended His Vote Against A Bipartisan Measure To Address Scheduling Problems At Veterans Affairs Facilities” Because It Cost Too Much.** According to The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, “In an interview with the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Thursday, U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, a Republican from Oshkosh, defended his vote against a bipartisan measure to address scheduling problems at Veterans Affairs facilities but vowed to continue to work to fix what he called a broken system. [...] On Wednesday, Johnson was one of only three Senators to vote against the legislation that would allow the VA to contract with private medical facilities, enabling veterans facing long waits to get quicker treatment. The VA would also be able to use \$500 million from its current budget to hire more medical staff. [...] Johnson detailed his reservations with the legislation in the interview and a detailed statement he released Wednesday. He said he preferred another bill that he co-sponsored that would provide ‘common sense reforms,’ including the ability for veterans to receive treatment outside the VA system. Johnson blamed Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) for rushing ‘a different bill onto the floor of the Senate without even an estimate of costs.’ He said the Senate should have delayed the vote after finally receiving a ‘pretty jaw-dropping piece of information’ from the Congressional Budget Office. Johnson said the CBO ‘came back and said just the first two years would cost \$35 billion, and every year after that \$50 billion.’ The bill will be taken up in the House and is expected to be finalized in a House-Senate conference. ‘Hopefully, we’ll come up with a bill that actually fixes the problem, that doesn’t mortgage our children’s future further...,’ Johnson said.” [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, [6/12/14](#)]

**2014: Johnson Voted Against Legislation Expanding Veterans’ Education And Health Care Benefits, Reforming Veterans Affairs Personnel Policies, And Expanding VA Facilities And Medical Staff.** In June 2014, Johnson voted against a bill that, according to Congressional Quarterly, “would [have] allow[ed] veterans experiencing long wait times or who live more than 40 miles from a Department of Veterans Affairs medical facility to see doctors outside the VA health system, as long as the doctors participate in the Medicare program or are at a federally qualified health center, Defense Department facility or a facility funded by the Indian Health Service. It would [have] authorize[d] the VA secretary to demote or fire poor-performing Senior Executive Service employees. Employees would have [had] seven days to appeal the decision to the Merit Systems Protection Board, which would have [had] 21 days to render a final decision. The measure would [have] create[d] an independent commission on scheduling and care, authorize[d] funding for 26 medical facility leases, and provide[d] expedited hiring authority for medical providers. It also would [have] allow[ed] out of state veterans to receive in-state tuition rates at public colleges and universities, and extend[ed] tuition benefits to surviving spouses of those who died in the line of duty.” The Senate passed the bill by a vote of 93 to 3; and the bill was then sent to a House-Senate conference committee. The resulting compromise version of the legislation was adopted by both chambers and signed into law by the president. [Senate Vote 187, [6/11/14](#); Congressional Quarterly, [6/11/14](#); Congressional Actions, [H.R. 3230](#)]

Quarterly, “would [have] extend[ed] and expand[ed] health care and education benefits and job-assistance programs for veterans and their families.” The vote was, according to a separate Congressional Quarterly article, on “an effort to waive a budget point of order made against the bill. [...] Sixty votes were needed to waive the point of order.” The Senate rejected the motion to waive the point of order by a vote of 56 to 41, which Congressional Quarterly explained “end[ed] floor consideration of the legislation.” Major provisions of the proposed bill, including the expanded education benefits provisions, were eventually included in legislation that Congress adopted at the end of July, 2014 in response to the Veterans Affairs Department’s wait-time cover-up scandal. [Senate Vote 46, [2/27/14](#); Congressional Quarterly, [2/27/14](#); Congressional Quarterly, [2/27/14](#); Congressional Quarterly, [7/30/14](#); Congressional Actions, [H.R. 3230](#)]

- **Bill Would Have Provided Dental Care to 30,000 Veterans.** According to Congressional Quarterly, “The legislation would direct the VA to carry out a three-year pilot program to provide comprehensive dental care to approximately 30,000 veterans who currently do not qualify for dental services from the VA.” [Congressional Quarterly, [2/27/14](#)]
- **Bill Would Have Lowered Public Education Institution Tuition For Veterans By Loosening In-State Tuition Restrictions.** According to Congressional Quarterly, “It also would require public universities participating in VA educational assistance programs to charge the in-state tuition rate to veterans who live within that state and enroll within three years of their discharge, regardless of their official state of residence.” [Congressional Quarterly, [2/27/14](#)]
- **Opponents Said “Audacious” Bill’s \$261 Million Of New Mandatory Spending Exceeded Limits Agreed To In December 2013 Budget Agreement, And Criticized Democrats For Trying To Exceed Those Limits After Only Two Months.** According to Congressional Quarterly, “Alabama Republican Jeff Sessions said he raised the point of order because new mandatory budget authority contained in the bill for fiscal 2014 — approximately \$261 million — would exceed the limits established by the December budget agreement (PL 113-67). He assailed the bill as ‘audacious’ and criticized Democrats for moving to waive the budget law only two months into the new year. ‘The ink is hardly dry on it, and here we have another bill to raise that, raise the spending again, and it won’t be the only one,’ he said,” [Congressional Quarterly, [2/27/14](#)]
- **Republicans Objected To Paying For Part Of Bill’s Cost With Iraq And Afghanistan War Funds.** According to Congressional Quarterly, “In addition to the immediate implications for mandatory spending, Republicans have also opposed tapping war funds to pay for the discretionary portion of the bill. The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that the discretionary cost of the bill would be \$18.3 billion through fiscal 2019. Those costs would be offset by placing caps on funds for overseas contingency operations, mainly the war in Afghanistan, beginning in fiscal 2018.” [Congressional Quarterly, [2/27/14](#)]
- **American Legion National Commander Daniel Dellinger: “I Don’t Know How Anyone Who Voted ‘No’ Today Can Look A Veteran In The Eye And Justify That Vote.”** According to the Washington Post, “Veterans groups expressed frustration with the bill’s failure, saying it fell victim to Washington’s partisan politics. The measure was four votes shy of a 60-vote threshold required for it to have advanced. ‘I don’t know how anyone who voted ‘no’ today can look a veteran in the eye and justify that vote,’ said Daniel M. Dellinger, national commander of the American Legion. ‘Our veterans deserve more than what they got today.’” [Washington Post, [2/27/14](#)]

**MARCH 2015: JOHNSON USED SCANDAL AS MEANS FOR CALLING FOR VA PRIVATIZATION**

**Johnson On The Veterans' Choice Program: "I Believe The Long-Term Solution On VA Hospitals Is, Start Moving It Toward A Private System."** Speaking at a campaign event, Johnson said, "They've got to set a standard somehow. And no matter – let's say they did it 50 miles by highway, you might be – at some point down there they have to set a standard, and you're going to be in it, or you're going to be out it. I'll tell you from my standpoint, I believe the long-term solution on VA hospitals is, start moving it more toward a private system – which is kind of, this is part, this is a step." [Ron Johnson At Lakeshore Family Restaurant, Wautoma, 3/14/15]

**Johnson Argued That A Government Run Hospital Such As The VA Would Not Be Able To Deliver The Best Quality Care.** According to WEAU, in a town hall meeting, Johnson was asked about the Tomah VA scandal and said, "Not that the doctors are bad, not that the nurses are bad, not that the people aren't trying to do a good job, there's just something about a government run bureaucracy that does not deliver the best quality at the best price with the best level of customer service." [WEAU, 3/14/15]

**Veterans of Foreign Wars Opposes Privatizing the VA** [Talking Points Memo, [11/11/12](#)]

**American Legion says,** "Those calling for the end of the VA and privatization of veterans health care are wrong. We continue to see The American Legion as partners and friends of the VA. We know they can and will do better." Mike Helm, upon being elected National Commander of the American Legion said, "We say that the VA can do a better job in the claims and appeals process. At the same time, we will continue to seek out answers to what went wrong at the VA and why it went wrong... We know that what happened wasn't an accident or a circumstance. There is an entrenchment in VA that is not helpful to veterans' health care or compensation. We will find it and get rid of it. At the same time, we will continue to support the VA as a national provider of veterans' health care. We need our VA medical facilities because we know it can be and is the best care anywhere if administrated properly. Those calling for the end of the VA and privatization of veterans health care are wrong. We continue to see The American Legion as partners and friends of the VA. We know they can and will do better." [American Legion, [8/28/14](#)]

**Paralyzed Veterans of America warned that privatizing the VA would create a "cottage industry" of "ambulance chasers."** In opposing the idea of privatization, the Paralyzed Veterans of America said, "Privatizing health care for veterans will create a cottage industry for ambulance chasers who will be the only available option for veterans with medical malpractices cases." [Military Times, [2/26/15](#)]

## **END, VOTEVETS.ORG REPORT.**

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The workers at the VA have reacted to the Commission on Care report, and this is what they say: [Looking out for the Veterans, our patients.](#)

- Dumping veterans on high-cost, low-quality private providers will lead to worse care for veterans and joblessness for dedicated VA employees.
- But there's one group that benefits handsomely: the private, for-profit health care industry.
- It's no surprise that Commissioners wrote a blank check to the health care industry with this report – 4 Commissioners are private health executives that stand to make a fortune from it.
- These recommendations are a windfall for profit-hungry hospital corporations looking to make a buck off the suffering of America's war heroes.
- We believe that caring for veterans should never be made into a profit-making enterprise.

Privatization will bring WORSE health care.

- The Commission states clearly that the VA's integrated, veteran-centric care model is better than private sector care, yet they advocate for large-scale privatization anyway. One has to question whether some Commissioners' interest is helping veterans, or their corporate friends.
- As it stands now, 87% of private mental health providers are unprepared to treat veterans.

- It is far better for veterans and taxpayers to invest in the only system tailored to veterans that is already proven to be better and has already made vast improvements.
- The U.S. health care system is recognized worldwide as the least efficient in the developed world, while the VA is model for cost effectiveness, clinical outcomes, and preventive care. Why on Earth would anyone suggest dumping millions of veterans into such a broken system?

Board of Directors:

- Giving the power to close hospitals and spend resources to an unaccountable board of highly-paid directors will put a costly layer between veterans and the health care they earned.
- We have no reason to suspect that the board will reflect the veterans' voice any more than the private-hospital-executive and Koch-Brothers-stacked Commission on Care did.
- The board will be highly-secretive since it is not subject to open meeting requirements under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, and may also not have to comply with FOIA.

And your actions haven't made any sense to workers OR veterans.

1. **Johnson Said The Ultimate Solution To The Problems With Healthcare Within The VA System Is To Give Veterans Access To The Private Healthcare System.** According to The Associated Press, "Johnson said the ultimate solution to problems with health care within the VA system is to give veterans access to the private health care system." [Associated Press, [5/31/16](#)]

2. **Cited Tomah Scandal As A Reason For Privatization**

**Johnson Said The Tomah VA Was An Example Of How "Government Run Bureaucracy... Does Not Deliver The Best" Service.** According to The Leader-Telegram, "While he insisted he doesn't question the motives of Democrats 'we all want a prosperous, safe and secure America,' he said Johnson strongly believes those on the other side of the political spectrum have the wrong ideas about how to achieve those goals. The key, he said, is to stop looking to government for solutions. Johnson pointed to the allegations regarding overprescribing of painkillers at the VA Medical Center in Tomah as an example. While he said the facility appears to have fine doctors, nurses and administrators, 'there's just something about a government run bureaucracy that does not deliver the best quality or the best price or the best customer service.'" [Leader-Telegram, 3/15/15]

3. **Johnson Blamed Tomah VA Scandal On Problems Inherent With A "Government-Run Health Care System."** During an interview with News Channel 7's Jacqueline Policastro, Johnson said, "[The Tomah VA scandal] is the tip of the iceberg. We would've liked to think there's just one problem with the VA in Arizona. Or, okay, two problems with Tomah. I don't believe that. First of all, I have to underscore the fact that we're dealing with a government-run health care system. We're dealing with a government bureaucracy. And, I don't know too many people that look at a bureaucratic system as being highly efficient, highly-effective, very cost effective." [WSAW, [3/29/15](#)]

4. **Johnson Used The Tomah VAMC Scandal To Argue Against Government Health Care.** According to Ashland Daily Press, "He said under ObamaCare, the nation was moving in the direction of

greater government control. 'Unlike in 2010 when they passed ObamaCare, America understands what a government run single-payer system looks like; the VA system,' he said. Johnson said the overmedication scandal the VA was currently involved with was the result of government bureaucracy inherent in a single-payer system. 'We have to get off this path of ObamaCare that is leading us towards a government-run single payer system that is not going to be good for our health interests,' he said." [Ashland Daily Press, [8/7/15](#)]

5. **Johnson Denied That He Was Politicizing Issues At The VA.** According to The Associated Press, "Johnson, telling reporters before the hearing he intends to be the "watchdog of the watchdog," denied that he was politicizing issues at the VA." [Associated Press, [5/31/16](#)]
6. **Johnson Argued That A Government Run Hospital Such As The VA Would Not Be Able To Deliver The Best Quality Care.** According to WEAU, in a town hall meeting, Johnson was asked about the Tomah VA scandal and said, "Not that the doctors are bad, not that the nurses are bad, not that the people aren't trying to do a good job, there's just something about a government run bureaucracy that does not deliver the best quality at the best price with the best level of customer service." [WEAU, 3/14/15] (VIDEO)
7. **Johnson On The VA: "It's A Government Run Health Care System" Which Makes It "Very Difficult" To Drive Quality Improvements, Lower Costs.** During an interview with Ron Johnson, Charlie Sykes asked, "Your thought about how we got to where we are right now with the VA?" Johnson replied, "Well, first of all it's a government run health care system. And, so, how do you drive quality improvements, customer service improvements, how do you drive down costs lower in a bureaucracy? It's very difficult. In the private sector, you've got free market competition which drives – that's that discipline that produces those things. And government bureaucracy, you really need disclosure. You need public opinion to force the type of changes that we have to bring on with the VA." [Charlie Sykes Insight, 4/1/15] (VIDEO, 150401\_ASN\_338\_C.mp4)
8. **Johnson On The Veterans' Choice Program: "I Believe The Long-Term Solution On VA Hospitals Is, Start Moving It Toward A Private System."** "They've got to set a standard somehow. And no matter – let's say they did it 50 miles by highway, you might be – at some point down there they have to set a standard, and you're going to be in it, or you're going to be out it. I'll tell you from my standpoint, I believe the long-term solution on VA hospitals is, start moving it more toward a private system – which is kind of, this is part, this is a step." [Ron Johnson At Lakeshore Family Restaurant, Wautoma, 3/14/15] (VIDEO, 150314\_ASN\_327\_A, 13:06)
9. **Johnson Called For Privatizing The VA Despite Saying Most Veterans Are Satisfied With The Care They Receive**

**"Johnson Said He Wanted To Emphasize That It Is His Understanding In Talking To Veterans That They're Very Satisfied, In General, With The Care They Receive From The VA."** According to Lakeland Times, "Johnson said he wanted to emphasize that it is his understanding in talking to veterans that they're very satisfied, in general, with the care they receive from the VA. 'The wait times are too long, the traveling is too long,' he said. 'But the vast majority of nurses,

doctors and administrators working in the [VA] health care system are doing a really good job. We always need to keep that in mind.” [Lakeland Times, [8/10/15](#)]

**10. Ron Johnson Said The “Vast Majority” Of Veterans He Speaks With Are Satisfied With The Care They Are Getting.** According to The Associated Press, “Johnson said that he ‘absolutely’ believed there were problems at other VA facilities across the country not being found by the inspector general’s office, but the ‘vast majority’ of veterans he speaks with are satisfied with the care they are getting.” [Associated Press, [5/31/16](#)]

**11. Johnson’s Plan To Privatize The VA Was Unpopular In Wisconsin**

**Public Policy Polling: Ron Johnson May Be Hurt By His Support For Privatizing The VA Health System.** According to Public Policy Polling, “Ron Johnson continues to be in deep trouble for reelection. Only 35% of voters approve of him to 42% who disapprove, and he trails Russ Feingold 46/39 in a head to head match up. One issue that may be hurting Johnson is his support for privatizing the Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system. Only 24% of voters in the state support doing that, to 68% who disapprove. There’s bipartisan opposition to the proposal with Democrats (76/15), independents (68/24), and Republicans (57/33) all strongly opposed to the concept. 57% of voters say Johnson’s stance on VA privatization makes them less likely to vote for him, compared to only 29% who consider it a positive. Among the critical independent voters who will make or break Johnson’s reelection chances, 58% are less likely to support him because of this stand.” [Public Policy Polling, [3/31/16](#)]

Senator Johnson, please join your constituents in the majority. HELP the VA by supporting it, not tearing it down for privatization. Support our veterans and those who care for them.

**VETERANS & THOSE THAT CARE  
JOIN US AT THE RALLY**

**OUR VETERANS PROUDLY SERVED - IT'S THEIR VA**

**"DON'T PRIVATIZE THE VA RALLY"**

**OCTOBER 3 @ NOON  
OUTSIDE THE FEDERAL BUILDING  
517 E. WISCONSIN AVE. MILW.**

**Greg West - Vietnam Veteran - Two Tours  
Patient At The VA For 44 Years  
Zablocki VA Medical Center Is One Of The Best In The Country  
Doctors / Staff / Employees Know About Veterans Care**

