



Support for the Jason Simcakoski Memorial Opioid Safety Act

"This is an opportunity to take all of this and learn from it.

We have a chance to create a new path; or we can continue how we currently are and keep making the same mistakes we are today. When I look back at the past, I want to know we made a difference. I want to believe we have leaders in our country who care. I want to inspire others to never give up because change is possible."

Heather Simcakoski, Jason's widow

"This legislation from Senator Baldwin is one of the most important actions we can take to save the lives of our greatest assets, our veterans."

Marv Simcakoski, Jason's father

"DAV Wisconsin has closely followed the overmedication issue at the Tomah VA Medical Center. We have given input to Deputy VA Secretary Sloan Gibson and Interim Under Secretary for Health Dr. Carolyn Clancy to prevent future occurrences. Additionally, we have submitted testimony to the Senate's Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. DAV Wisconsin strongly supports the introduction of the *Jason Simcakoski Memorial Opioid Safety Act* by Senator Baldwin and feels, if enacted, it will be an important step in preventing future tragedies at Tomah VA and other VA sites." - **Disabled American Veterans Wisconsin (DAV Wisconsin) Legislative Director Al Labelle**

"Veterans who struggle with complex pain or mental health care conditions have earned and deserve a VA health care system that provides them the best health care available in a timely manner. The VFW supports this important legislation which we believe will improve the health care VA provides America's veterans, and we thank Senator Baldwin for her leadership in bringing it forward." - **Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) National Legislative Director Raymond Kelley**

"The American Legion applauds the *Jason Simcakoski Memorial Opioid Safety Act* and Senator Baldwin's efforts to reform prescribing practices for veterans. Medications in and of themselves are tools – not necessarily good, not necessarily bad – you want to make sure you're using the right tools in the right situation. There are other tools that are available. Some complementary and alternative therapy might work better for particular veterans or for veterans that may have circumstances that are particularly exacerbating." - **The American Legion Legislative Division Director Ian DePlanque**

"The *Jason Simcakoski Memorial Opioid Safety Act* by Senator Baldwin is an important step forward in protecting veterans suffering from debilitating chronic pain. Veterans for Common Sense supports this thorough, thoughtful legislation, which among its many wise provisions would reduce risk of overmedication, improve prescribing guidelines, and advance pain management alternatives. Importantly, the bill would also require new VA accountability, audits, and transparency. Veterans for Common Sense salutes Senator Baldwin's leadership in authoring this bill, and urges Congress to swiftly pass it to get VA on the right track with regards to opioid safety." - **Veterans for Common Sense Director Anthony Hardie**

“AMVETS thanks Senator Baldwin for her ongoing support of all American veterans and especially for her leadership in the development and introduction of the *Jason Simcakoski Memorial Opioid Safety Act*. Once enacted, this legislation will go a long way towards reducing veteran addiction to prescription medications, thereby greatly improving their quality of life, their ability to secure and retain appropriate, living-wage jobs and to continue their service to our great nation.” - **AMVETS National Legislative Director Diane M. Zumatto**

“Disabled American Veterans is dedicated to a single purpose: empowering veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity. Based on several resolutions adopted by our membership in our most recent National Convention, DAV strongly supports the *Jason Simcakoski Memorial Opioid Safety Act* which seeks to improve VA patient advocacy services, expand availability of complementary and alternative health care services for pain management, and ensure safe prescribing practices of addictive substances. We appreciate Senator Baldwin’s leadership in developing this legislation and we urge Congress to proceed with its enactment this year.” - **Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Executive Director Garry J. Augustine**

“We cannot save our veterans’ lives by destroying them. The VA must cautiously utilize opioids for treatment of our veterans with heightened recognition, monitoring and control of their attendant dangers. There is no room for the cavalier prescription of these potentially fatal pharmaceuticals. NGAUS strongly supports the Jason Simcakoski Memorial Opioid Safety Act as a long needed step on the path to improving pain management care for our deserving veterans and their families.” - **National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS) Outgoing Director of Legislation Peter J. Duffy, Colonel U.S. Army (Ret)**

“The Jason Simcakoski Memorial Opioid Safety Act is an extremely important and timely piece of legislation. MOAA fully supports this bipartisan effort and commends Senator Tammy Baldwin for championing such a critical bill that will keep veterans safe and provide VA with the necessary tools to more effectively manage pain services.” **Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) President VADM Norb Ryan, USN-ret.**

“The American Society of Addiction Medicine is pleased to support the introduction of the Jason Simcakoski Memorial Opioid Safety Act, sponsored by Senator Baldwin. Improving opioid prescribing practices, including through prescriber education, is a crucial component of a multipronged effort to stem the epidemic of prescription drug addiction and overdose deaths in the U.S., and we applaud the Senator for the comprehensive approach this legislation takes to ensuring our veterans receive safe and compassionate care.” - **American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) President R. Jeffrey Goldsmith, MD, DLFAPA, FASAM**

“As the nation’s largest organization representing people living with serious mental illness and their families, the National Alliance on Mental Illness offers our strong support for the *Jason Simcakoski Memorial Opioid Safety Act* and Senator Baldwin’s leadership in bringing forward legislation that aims to provide safe and appropriate opioid prescribing practices at the VA. We applaud the Senator’s call to provide enhanced prescribing guidelines, case management, monitoring programs, the establishment of pain management boards, and in providing access to community meetings to address these issues. We thank Senator Baldwin for bringing this important legislation forward and look forward to working to ensure its swift passage.” - **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Manager of Military and Veterans Policy Ingrid Herrera-Yee, PhD**

"The tragic rise in opioid overdose deaths among our veterans and active duty military personnel demands urgent attention. Harm Reduction Coalition supports the thoughtful, comprehensive approach taken by Senator Baldwin's Jason Simcakoski Memorial Opioid Safety Act to improve opioid prescribing and pain management, expand the VA's promising Overdose Education and Naloxone Distribution program, and ensure effective guidance and clear accountability across the VA system." - **Harm Reduction Coalition Policy Director Daniel Raymond**

“Every hour in the United States, five people die as the result of a drug overdose. Of the 22,767 pharmaceutical overdose deaths in 2013, 71.3 percent involved opioid analgesics. This epidemic is affecting people of all ages, experiences and income levels, and our nation’s veterans are no exception. In fact, research has shown that abuse of prescription drugs is higher among service members and veterans than among the general population. With these sobering data in mind, we are proud to support the Jason Simcakoski Memorial Opioid Safety Act, and we applaud Senator Baldwin for taking this important step to save the lives of those who have put their lives on the line for us.” - **National Safety Council President & CEO Deborah A. P. Hersman.**

“Trust for America’s Health is pleased to endorse the *Jason Simcakoski Memorial Opioid Safety Act*, which will help improve healthcare for our nation’s veterans. Prescription drug abuse has become a public health crisis—60 Americans die every day from a prescription drug overdose. By strengthening the Department of Veterans Affairs’ opioid prescribing guidelines; improving pain management services; increasing access to lifesaving rescue medications; and ensuring that opioid prescribers have appropriate training and education, this legislation will prevent and reduce drug abuse and misuse. TFAH applauds Senator Baldwin for her work in introducing this important legislation.” - **Trust for America’s Health (TFAH) Executive Director Jeffrey Levi, PhD**

"The Wisconsin Medical Society appreciates Senator Baldwin's leadership in introducing the Jason Simcakoski Memorial Opioid Safety Act and is proud to support the bill. There is an opioid public health crisis in Wisconsin and throughout the country and this legislation makes important regulatory reforms in the VA System to help ensure safer opioid prescribing for our veterans. Physicians stand ready to be part of the solution, and as the Chief Medical Officer of the Wisconsin Medical Society and a veteran, I am grateful Senator Baldwin is asking for critical opioid reforms to happen in the VA System." - **Wisconsin Medical Society’s Donn Dexter, M.D.**

“AFGE strongly supports the *Jason Simcakoski Memorial Opioid Safety Act* and commends Senator Baldwin for her leadership on this critical patient safety issue for our nation’s veterans. This important legislation establishes lifesaving preventive measures that ensure safe opioid prescribing practices while expanding available treatment options consistent with current best practices and research.” - **American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) Legislative and Political Director Beth Moten**

Senators Baldwin and Capito’s Jason Simcakoski Memorial Opioid Safety Act is supported by: Disabled American Veterans Wisconsin, Disabled American Veterans (DAV), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), The American Legion, Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), Veterans for Common Sense, Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), Association of the United States Navy (AUSN), National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS), American Veterans (AMVETS), Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), and Trust for America's Health (TFAH), Wisconsin Medical Society, National Safety Council, Harm Reduction Coalition, American Federation of Government Employee (AFGE), and Military Health Project.

Senators Baldwin and Capito’s Jason Simcakoski Memorial Opioid Safety Act is cosponsored by Democrats and Republicans: U.S. Senate Assistant Democratic Leader Dick Durbin (D-IL), Ranking Member of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee, U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), and U.S. Senators Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Al Franken (D-MN), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Ron Johnson (R-WI), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Joe Manchin (D-WV), Ed Markey (D-MA), Jerry Moran (R-KS), Patty Murray (D-WA), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Jon Tester (D-MT), and Mark Warner (D-VA).