

[UPDATE: 18 Veterans Groups Join IAVA's Deborah Sampson Act](#)

NEW YORK, NY (April 18, 2017) – Today, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), the leading voice of the Post-9/11 generation of veterans, is proud to announce the support of 18 leading national Veteran and Military Service Organizations for the Deborah Sampson Act, a key component of IAVA's historic [#SheWhoBorneTheBattle](#) campaign. The 18 organizations join IAVA and a bipartisan group of legislators that have signed-on in support of the groundbreaking piece of legislation to fully recognize and support women veterans.

“This is a massive showing of support for this groundbreaking effort as momentum continues to build. This swift support and unity behind the Deborah Sampson Act is a clear indicator that women veterans are badly lacking the recognition and support they deserve,” **said Allison Jaslow, Iraq veteran and IAVA's Chief of Staff.** “Women are the fastest growing segment of the veteran population, but yet far too many still feel invisible. That's why IAVA launched our groundbreaking [#SheWhoBorneTheBattle](#) campaign last month and partnered with bipartisan leaders in Congress to introduce the Deborah Sampson Act. We are proud have so many nationally-respected, diverse partners behind the Deborah Sampson Act.”

Driven by data from IAVA's [annual member survey](#), the bi-partisan Deborah Sampson Act (co-sponsored by Senators Jon Tester and John Boozman) will:

- Change the VA's sexist motto that excludes women
- Expand peer-to-peer assistance for women veterans
- Establish legal service partnerships and provide funding for low-income women veterans services
- Increase VA's capacity to provide newborn care
- Eliminate access barriers to VA health care faced by women veterans
- Require gender-specific data tracking and reporting

The powerful organizations now joining IAVA in support of the Deborah Sampson Act are: Wounded Warrior Project (WWP), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), American Legion, Disabled Veterans of America (DAV), Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), American Veterans (AMVETS), Jewish War Veterans (JWV), Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), Service Women's Action Network (SWAN), National Military Families Association (NMFA), Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service (COA), U.S. Army Warrant Officers Association (USAWOA), Marine Corps Reserve Association (MCRA), Fleet Reserve Association (FRA), Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA), The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA), Military Officers Association of America (MOAA).

“With over a dozen organizations and bi-partisan support for this effort, now

is the time for every single member of the Senate to get on board. America's veterans are watching. If you're a member of the U.S. Senate who is not signed on to the Deborah Sampson Act, you're wrong," **added IAVA's CEO and Founder, Paul Rieckhoff.** "We also call on the President to finally express his public support for this urgent and important bill. It's essential to supporting our veterans and also to our national defense. Especially after the Marines United scandal, the President has been silent for too long." Rieckhoff continued, "We call on Congressional leadership to make the Deborah Sampson Act a priority and to send a bill to the President's desk before Memorial Day next month."

"COA is pleased to support S. 681. We do so on behalf of the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS)," **said Judith Rensberger, MS, MPH Government Relations Director of COA.** "This is an all-officer, active-duty force of 6,500 health professionals, of whom 53 percent are female."

"For too long, many women veterans have felt marginalized by a VA health care and benefits system designed primarily for men," **said David W. Riley, DAV National Commander.** "While significant improvements have been made, there is much work left to create fully equitable care for this rapidly growing demographic. We applaud Senator Tester's commitment to the nation's women veterans and urge swift passage of this important measure."

"On behalf of the more than 2.2 million members of The American Legion, we are pleased to offer our support for the Deborah Sampson Act, an important women veterans empowerment bill named after a hero of the American Revolution and the only woman to earn a military pension for participation in the Revolutionary army," **said Charles E. Schmidt, The American Legion National Commander.** "This bill, as currently written, would improve the ability of the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide women's care, improve services, and change its culture to embrace this growing population."

"When I left the military, I refused to use VA because I didn't think it was women friendly," **said Amber Putnam, VFW Women Veterans Committee member.** "VA has made much progress in caring for women veterans since then. I now get all my care at VA and as a VFW service officer help other female veterans obtain the care and benefits they have earned. The comprehensive, bipartisan, and bicameral Deborah Sampson Act would ensure transitioning service members don't have to go through the same experience."

"Paralyzed Veterans of America (Paralyzed Veterans) supports the Deborah Sampson Act of 2017," **said Carl Blake, Associate Executive Director of Government Relations, PVA.** "This bill would help to address some of the quality of care barriers that are unique to women veterans. From transition services, to health care access, to the availability of prosthetics, this bill is a critical and timely step to enhancing the health and well-being of women veterans and their families. As women veterans are the fastest growing population of veterans, Paralyzed Veterans urges Congress to enable the VA to improve specialized services for women and enact this legislation."

Last Month, Sens. John Boozman (R-AR), Jon Tester (D-MT), Bill Nelson (D-FL), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT),

Patty Murray (D-WA), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), and Brian Schatz (D-HI) introduced the [Senate version of the Deborah Sampson Act](#) (S.681). The announcement took place during IAVA's [Storm The Hill](#) initiative that launched the [#SheWhoBorneTheBattle](#) campaign. The House will introduce their version of the bill in the coming weeks.

IAVA urges supporters to visit [SheWhoBorneTheBattle.org](#) and [click take action to contact their elected officials to support the Deborah Sampson Act](#).

She Who Borne The Battle: More than 345,000 women have deployed since 9/11. Women are the fastest-growing segment of the veteran population and that trend will continue as the number of male veterans simultaneously declines over the next decades. However, many female veterans are left without the proper care to support their needs when they return from their service. She Who Borne the Battle will change this by providing a foundation of public awareness, local support and policy changes solely targeted at supporting and empowering female veterans. Learn more at [SheWhoBorneTheBattle.org](#).

IAVA is the leading voice of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans in Washington D.C. and communities nationwide. Led by veterans, our non-partisan advocacy work ensures that Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and their families are supported, protected and never forgotten. Since 2004, IAVA has been a juggernaut in Washington D.C., creating and driving the national conversation on issues ranging from Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) to women veteran issues to veteran unemployment.

IAVA's dedicated staff in Washington, D.C. leads this work, advocating on behalf of our members daily. We also train our member veterans to be powerful advocates for their local community.

IAVA is focused on results and has delivered historic impacts. Every year since 2007, in an increasingly gridlocked political environment and with an extremely limited operating budget, IAVA has passed at least one major piece of groundbreaking legislation for our community ranging from the Post-9/11 GI Bill (2008), to the VOW to Hire Heroes Act (2011), to The Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans (SAV) Act (2015).

See [IAVA's Advocacy Program Digital Hub](#) for the full list of victories, our extensive policy recommendations and to learn more about how you can help.