

After Release of Damning IG Report, New Vets Renew Call For VA Accountability

New York, NY (May 29, 2014) – After a damning report from the Department of Veterans Affairs Inspector General outlining systemic issues at the Phoenix VA and across the VA system, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) is on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington today calling for accountability and reform to fix the longstanding problems facing the Department.

Thursday afternoon, IAVA will participate in a meeting with VA Secretary Eric Shinseki and other top VA officials. IAVA is demanding more answers about the VA's response to the growing crisis.

Earlier, at 12:30 p.m at the House Triangle, IAVA will join House leaders and other veterans organizations for a press conference calling on the U.S. Senate to pass the VA Accountability Act. The bill would reduce barriers for the VA secretary to fire poor performing senior VA officials.

“Our veterans have been crying out for help for years. They’ve been ignored, they’ve been dismissed, and they’ve been betrayed,” said IAVA CEO and Founder Paul Rieckhoff. “Wednesday’s damning report underscores the need for real reform and accountability. Our members are outraged and still waiting for leadership from President Obama and Secretary Shinseki and top officials at the VA, as well as members of Congress from both parties. At the VA, on Capitol Hill and across the country, we will continue to demand accountability and a strong plan of action to ensure veterans receive the care and benefits they earned.”

Among its findings, the IG report found that inappropriate scheduling practices are systemic throughout the VA health system; the majority of veterans waiting for primary care were not on an official wait list; 84% of new patients waited longer than the VA standard of 14 days for primary-care appointment; and there are numerous allegations of mismanagement, inappropriate hiring decisions, sexual harassment and bullying behavior by mid- and senior-level managers. The full report can be found [here](#).

IAVA's [2014 Policy Agenda](#) provides a road map for supporting veterans and getting them the care they earned.

And as the VA scandal grows, IAVA continues to address the top issue for its members: combating veteran suicide. An estimated 22 veterans die by suicide every day. IAVA is urging Senators to cosponsor the historic and comprehensive Suicide Prevention for American Veterans (SAV) Act, S. 2182, which would significantly strengthen efforts to combat suicide. The bill is sponsored by Senator John Walsh of Montana, the only post-9/11 combat veteran

in the U.S. Senate.