

Before Trump Visit, IAVA Attends VA Sec Roundtable

WASHINGTON, D.C. (April 27, 2017) – Today, ahead of President Trump’s visit and press conference at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) Founder and CEO Paul Rieckhoff participated in a monthly Veteran Service Organization (VSO) roundtable with VA Secretary David Shulkin and senior VA officials. Secretary Shulkin briefed IAVA, the leading post-9/11 Veterans Empowerment Organization, and other leading groups on their work in the first 100 days and plans moving forward.

Rieckhoff reiterated IAVA’s priorities, including our focus on the [#SheWhoBorneTheBattle](#) campaign, ongoing efforts to [#DefendTheGIBill](#) from a proposed tax on enlistees, alarming new data about suicide rates for women veterans, and other top priorities outlined in our most recent [Policy Agenda](#).

“IAVA appreciates the opportunity to sit down again with Secretary Shulkin and senior VA officials to hear the latest from inside VA. We appreciate their continued openness and dedication to reform, and their update on the progress on accountability and actions taken at the Washington, DC VA hospital. I was glad to have an opportunity to again share the priorities of our members directly with the Secretary,” **said Rieckhoff**. “As I said today, the voices of IAVA’s members have never been more important. Right now, we are looking to Secretary Shulkin and President Trump to publicly stand with IAVA, a bi-partisan coalition of elected leaders and over 17 leading veterans groups to change the VA motto that alienates a growing percentage of our population. I again asked Secretary Shulkin and the White House to strongly support swift passage of the Deborah Sampson Act for women veterans. With Mother’s Day and Memorial Day coming next month, this is the time to stand with us. I also asked him to publicly stand with our members, the VFW and countless others to stop a ridiculous Congressional proposal to impose a tax on troops to use the GI Bill. As war continues around the globe, now is not the time to nickel-and-dime our troops for their wartime benefits. We will not allow Congress to pay for wartime programs on the backs of our newest warriors. Not on our watch. IAVA is tirelessly fighting on behalf of our members to stop this tax and we want the President to show us he is listening. Although we were not invited, IAVA members worldwide will be closely watching his remarks at 4:45PM and hope to hear a strong message on both these critical issues.”

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 five years. 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. Lead elements include changing the outdated VA

motto and passing the historic Deborah Sampson Act for women veterans. Learn more at SheWhoBorneTheBattle.org

Defend the GI Bill: IAVA led the passage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill in 2008 and in championing upgrades in 2010 and 2014. These upgrades simplified and improved tuition benefits, expanded eligibility to the National Guard, included vocational programs, and made nationwide in-state tuition rates a possibility for new veterans. The Post-9/11 GI Bill has been used at least 1.5 million veterans and their family members to accomplish educational goals and chart new career paths. In 2016, IAVA's year-long campaign to [#DefendtheGIBill](#) effectively killed over \$4 billion in attempted cuts to the Post-9/11 GI Bill by the 114th Congress. IAVA member service programs have also served hundreds of thousands of veterans with one-on-one GI Bill support.

IAVA is the leading voice of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans in Washington 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 for transformative policy change, creating and driving the national conversation and lasting change on issues ranging from Traumatic Brain Injury \(TBI\) to women veteran issues to veteran unemployment.](#)

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](#) the full list of victories, our policy agenda and to learn more about how you can help.