

[California Vets Pressure Congress To Pass Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention Bill](#)

San Francisco, CA (December 8, 2014) – As Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) continues to urge members of Congress to support the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans (SAV) Act, H.R. 5059, veterans in California are pressuring their local lawmakers to get behind the bipartisan legislation. IAVA CEO and Founder Paul Rieckhoff will be in San Francisco and Los Angeles to meet with post-9/11 veterans and their families on the ground.

On Dec. 9, from 6 to 8 p.m. at Brigade's San Francisco office, Rieckhoff will share the latest on the veterans' space, ongoing reform efforts at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the critical fight to pass the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention bill. Media is encouraged to attend the [event](#).

Then, on Dec. 11, from 6 to 8 p.m., director and IAVA Board Member Peter Berg, director of "Lone Survivor" and "Friday Night Lights," will join Rieckhoff in hosting local post-9/11 veterans at the Wild Card West Boxing Club in Santa Monica. Media is encouraged to attend the [event](#).

"Our members across the country are rallying for passage of the Clay Hunt SAV Act," said Rieckhoff. "After sending our message to Capitol Hill and the White House last week, we now urge Americans to stand with their veterans and tell their members of Congress to pass this bill. We aren't going to stop – and our vets won't either. With its vast military and veterans communities statewide, combating suicide and improving mental health care for veterans should be a major priority for lawmakers in California. Home to IAVA's largest base of membership, our members want to see the Clay Hunt SAV Act pass through before Congress heads home for the holidays. Improving mental health care for our veterans should not be a political fight."

IAVA applauds the [15 California co-sponsors](#) who signed onto H.R. 5059: Rep. Jerry McNerney (D-Calif.), Rep. Paul Cook (R-Calif.), Rep. Scott Peters (D-Calif.), Rep. John Garamendi (D-Calif.), Rep. Gloria McLeod (D-Calif.), Rep. Linda Sanchez (D-Calif.), Rep. Ami Bera (D-Calif.), Rep. Mike Thompson (D-Calif.), Rep. Julia Brownley (D-Calif.), Rep. Michael Honda (D-Calif.), Rep. Barbara Lee (D-Calif.), Rep. Jackie Speier (D-Calif.), Rep. Doris Matsui (D-Calif.), Rep. Doug LaMalfa (R-Calif.), Rep. David Valadao (R-Calif.).

There are more than 1.7 million veterans in California, including more than 244,000 who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan. More than 239,000 veterans are stuck in the VA backlog, including more than 9,000 in the Oakland regional office and 9,400 Los Angeles regional office, who are waiting more than 125 days for a claim. The average wait time in Oakland is 165.8 days, and the average wait time in Los Angeles is 170.8 days. Unemployment for post-9/11 veterans in California stands at 14.3 percent.

California is also home to IAVA's [Rapid Response Referral Program \(RRRP\)](#), an

innovative approach to supporting post-9/11 veterans by directly connecting them and their families to local resources and to one-on-one support with IAVA's Veteran Transition Managers. RRRP helps cut through red tape and provides California post-9/11 veterans and their families with access to services ranging across employment, education, housing, mental health and more.

Veterans can contact a California RRRP case manager by calling 855-91-RAPID (855-917-2743), emailing transition@iava.org, or visiting www.IAVA.org/RRRP.