

# Clay Hunt SAV Act Finally Scheduled to Pass Senate Today

*Senate vote scheduled for 5:30pm*

**Washington D.C. (February 2, 2015)** – This evening, the U.S. Senate is scheduled to take up critical legislation that will combat veteran suicide and improve access to mental health care. Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) is imploring members of the Senate to stand with our veterans by passing the bipartisan Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans (SAV) Act. The bipartisan bill, introduced by Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) has a total of 47 co-sponsors – 27 Democrats, 18 Republicans and two Independents. The legislation is named after Marine sniper Clay Hunt from Texas, who died by suicide in 2011. A full list of co-sponsors can be found [here](#).

The vote will occur on the same day as “Chris Kyle Day” in Texas, honoring the legacy of the late sharpshooter, who has become a household name due to the success of “American Sniper.”

“Richard and I are so thankful for the amount of support we have received since we began our journey advocating on behalf of veterans like Clay. Unfortunately, there are many Clays out there who are struggling to get access to the mental health care they so desperately need. We appreciate the bill being brought up in the Senate today and urge members to pass this crucial legislation quickly. Time is of the essence for our veterans to receive the best mental health care we can provide. Although no legislation will bring back our son, this bill will give hope to the thousands of heroes who served our country and are now in urgent need of our help as they transition home as civilians.”

“This no nonsense bill not only will help save lives, but also honor the obligation the government made to our veterans when they put on the uniform. With its passage, our country can begin to curb the alarmingly high veteran suicide rate. And we can’t wait any longer as 22 veterans die by suicide every day,” said IAVA CEO and Founder Paul Rieckhoff. “After more than a year of effort and a tough obstacle in December, it all comes down to tonight. As the bill goes to the Senate floor, we urge every Senator to sign on as a co-sponsor and show they stand with our nation’s veterans. The VA and more than 20 veteran service organizations and partners supports its passage. Our veterans need this bill passed tonight.”

Developed by IAVA and its allies on Capitol Hill, and driven by qualitative and qualitative data from [IAVA’s annual member survey](#), the Clay Hunt SAV Act will:

## **Increase Access to Mental Health Care and Capacity at VA to Meet Demand**

- Requires the VA to create a one-stop, interactive website to serve as a

centralized source of information regarding all VA mental health services for veterans.

- Addresses the shortage of mental health care professionals by authorizing the VA to conduct a student loan repayment pilot program aimed at recruiting and retaining psychiatrists.
- Extends Combat-Eligibility for mental health care services at VA for one-year, providing for increased access for veterans that may be suffering from conditions such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

#### **Improve the Quality of Care and Boosting Accountability at VA**

- Requires evaluations of all mental health care and suicide prevention practices and programs at the VA to find out what's working and what's not working and make recommendations to improve care.

#### **Develop a Community Support System for Veterans**

- Establishes a peer support and community outreach pilot program to assist transitioning servicemembers with accessing VA mental health care services.