

# Clay Hunt SAV Act Gains Momentum

**Chairman Isakson predicts Senate vote Monday afternoon, four new cosponsors added**

**New York, NY (January 28, 2015)** – The Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans (SAV) Act continues to gain momentum in the U.S. Senate after unanimously passing the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC) last week. The bipartisan bill, introduced by Senator John McCain (R-Ariz.) added four new co-sponsors this week, bringing the total to 39 – 24 Democrats, 13 Republicans and two Independents. Today, SVAC Chairman Isakson said veterans should expect a floor vote next Monday.

Yesterday, four Senators signed onto the bill, including both U.S. Senators from California. As VA Secretary McDonald visited southern California to announce a historic legal settlement regarding the West Los Angeles VA, Senator Dianne Feinstein and Senator Barbara Boxer are now sponsoring the legislation. Combating suicide is a top priority for post-9/11 veterans in California with one out of every eight IAVA members hailing from the Golden State.

"The week before the Super Bowl, and after a long and hard fight, we are now finally on the five yard line. After only a few weeks into the new year, the Clay Hunt SAV Act has already galvanized a tremendous amount of support from lawmakers from both parties, veteran service organizations, the VA, and groups like the American Psychiatric Association. It is affirming to see so many Senators step up so quickly to support this bill, but we need to act fast as 22 veterans continue to die by suicide every day. IAVA members across the country are now looking to the Senate to see who has our back," said IAVA CEO and Founder Paul Rieckhoff. "The blockbuster success of 'American Sniper' demonstrates the growing public interest in the mental health care concerns of our nation's veterans as they return home from war. It powerfully tells the story of American Sniper Chris Kyle's transition home to Texas. Our friend and the namesake of this bill, Clay Hunt was also an American Sniper from Texas. We urge the Senate to honor his memory and pass the Clay Hunt SAV Act as soon as possible."

Co-sponsors of S. 167 include:

Sen. Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.)  
Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.)  
Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.)  
Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.)  
Sen. John Boozman (R-Ark.)  
Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.)  
Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio)  
Sen. Richard Burr (R-N.C.)  
Sen. Benjamin Cardin (D-Md.)  
Sen. Robert Casey Jr. (D-Pa.)

Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine)  
Sen. Christopher Coons (D-Del.)  
Sen. Joe Donnelly (D-Ind.)  
Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.)  
Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.)  
Sen. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.)  
Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.)  
Sen. Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.)  
Sen. Dean Heller (R-Nev.)  
Sen. Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii)  
Sen. James Inhofe (R-Okla.)  
Sen. Angus King Jr. (I-Maine)  
Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.)  
Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W. Va.)  
Sen. Edward Markey (D-Mass.)  
Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.)  
Sen. Robert Menendez (D-N.J.)  
Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.)  
Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska)  
Sen. Christopher Murphy (D-Conn.)  
Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.)  
Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.)  
Sen. Gary Peters (D-Mich.)  
Sen. Jack Reed (D-R.I.)  
Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.)  
Sen. Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.)  
Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.)  
Sen. Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska)  
Sen. Jon Tester (D-Mont.)  
Sen. Thom Tillis (R-N.C.)

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.

**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.