

[IAVA Applauds Bipartisan Senate Compromise to Begin Reforming the VA](#)

Washington DC (June 5, 2014) – Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), the nation's largest non-profit, non-partisan organization representing post-9/11 veterans and their families, today praised Senate leaders on both sides of the aisle for their bipartisan work on addressing critical access issues at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Earlier, Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Senator John McCain (R-AZ), one of two combat veterans in the Senate, announced a bipartisan deal that would address access and care issues for veterans within the VA system.

The compromise was announced the same day Acting VA Secretary Sloan Gibson addressed the ongoing VA scandal, saying that 18 veterans died while waiting for appointments with the Phoenix VA Health Care System.

On Monday, IAVA CEO & Founder Paul Rieckhoff, joined by IAVA veterans from across the country, unveiled [eight steps](#) the Obama Administration and Congress can take now to restore confidence in the Department of Veterans Affairs. Among the steps are recommendations from IAVA's 2014 Policy Agenda. IAVA urged Congress and the President to enact all of the recommendations from the plan.

"Reforming the VA requires a bipartisan effort on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue. We are very encouraged by the compromise forged by Senators Sanders and McCain," Rieckhoff said. "Today's progress shows veterans issues is the one thing that parties can come together on. We hope the Senate and House can move forward to enact legislation that will ensure veterans get the care and benefits they have earned. However, we still need the President to step up and take a more active role in restoring confidence within the VA and lay out a strategy for the way forward."

Rieckhoff added: "Many of the provisions announced in today's compromise are part of IAVA's [eight-part 'Marshall Plan' for veterans](#). The VA scandal is far from over. We urge Congress and the Administration to embrace all our recommendations. As the VA confirmed how severe mismanagement was in Phoenix, it is imperative that the men and women who served our country never have to wait for care."

The legislation directly addresses accountability issues at the VA by allowing poorly performing SES employees to be immediately dismissed without pay while also establishing an expedited appeals process to discourage fraudulent dismissals. This legislation will also allow veterans to see providers outside the VA system if the wait times for appointments are too long or if the veteran lives more than 40 miles from a VA hospital or clinic. The need to address the VA's technological capabilities, particularly with scheduling, will also be evaluated through the establishment of a Tech Task

Force. In addition to these access and accountability measures, this legislation also includes several other major provisions supported by IAVA's [2014 Policy Agenda](#), including much needed major medical facility lease authorizations, in-state tuition for veterans using GI Bill benefits, and increased access to health care for survivors of MST.