

[IAVA Attends First Lady's Launch of the Philanthropy-Joining Forces Pledge](#)

Washington D.C. (April 30, 2014) –Today, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) is attending the launch of the Philanthropy-Joining Forces Pledge at the American Red Cross. First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden will speak at the event. Less than a week after reports surfaced alleging 40 veterans died waiting for care at the Phoenix VA, IAVA CEO and Founder Paul Rieckhoff will unite with other national leaders in support of a historic philanthropic commitment to military and veteran families. More than 30 funders will make the pledge in an effort to support service members, veterans and their families. Additionally, the Council on Foundations will announce a Veterans Philanthropy Exchange to help share best practices among funders. IAVA has been a proud member of the White Oak Steering Committee and worked frequently with the Council on Foundations over the last few years.

“IAVA applauds the leadership of Joining Forces, the First Lady and Dr. Biden and the foundations in attendance today,” Rieckhoff said. “As one of the top-rated veterans organizations in America, IAVA is proud to be a member of the White Oak Steering Committee and to have worked closely with the Council on Foundations to help them to better understand our community. The Phoenix tragedy, Fort Hood shooting and the latest Pentagon suicide numbers all sadly underscore the urgent need for a sustained, national effort to ensure all our vets get the care and support they deserve.”

Rieckhoff added, “This challenge is much more than the government can handle alone. These leading foundations have made a bold, visionary commitment to the future of our community—and the future of our country. We hope that today’s event and the launch of The Exchange will encourage countless philanthropists of all sizes nationwide to follow their lead and do the same. America’s veterans are not a charity, they are an investment. And there is no more ripe philanthropic investment opportunity than the future of the young men and women who have served in our military since 9/11. We hope the funds invested will be used wisely for programs that have substantive impact on our returning heroes and their families – in the areas of health, education, employment and community. We hope there will especially be resources focused on our top issue for 2014: combating suicide. IAVA looks forward to working with leaders from across the nation to ensure every dollar is maximized. The role of philanthropy is essential in ensuring this generation of American veterans and their families are the most successful in our nation’s history.”

IAVA’s top priority for 2014 is combating veteran suicide. As part of the “We’ve Got Your Back: IAVA’s Campaign to Combat Suicide” IAVA is focused on reversing the terrible trend of veterans suicides through three goals: 1) connecting one million veterans nationwide with transitional support information; 2) Calling on President Obama to issue an Executive Order focused on veteran suicide; and 3) Calling on Congress to pass comprehensive veteran suicide prevention legislation. IAVA has led in the creation,

introduction and support of S.2182, The Suicide Prevention for America's Veterans Act (SAV Act). Introduced by U.S. Senator John Walsh of Montana, the first Iraq vet ever to serve in the Senate, IAVA's national membership is now calling on all members of the Senate to sign on to this groundbreaking bill immediately.

The Philanthropy-Joining Forces Pledge comes at a critical time for veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars. A report from last week alleges that at least 40 veterans died while waiting for an appointment at the Phoenix VA. It's alleged that many of those vets were placed on a secret waiting list in order to hide how thousands of sick veterans were being forced to wait months to see a doctor. IAVA is joining calls for a complete investigation. IAVA also supports legislation, H.R. 4031, the "Department of Veterans Affairs Management Accountability Act", to ensure accountability in these situations.