

[IAVA Calls on Washington to Solve the National Veterans Suicide Crisis](#)

New York, NY (April 18, 2019) – As the number of veterans dying by suicide continues to climb, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) calls on the President, Congress and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to increase their focus on finding and implementing immediate solutions to this national crisis.

“Just as there is no single cause of veteran suicide, there is also no single solution. However, there are a number of steps that must be taken immediately to begin truly reducing the tragic number of veterans who die by suicide every day,” said IAVA [CEO Jeremy Butler](#).

Last Month, the President signed an [Executive Order](#) establishing a federal task force to study this issue, giving them a year to come up with recommendations. The President’s call to action was welcome, but this issue is much more urgent than that – we lose 20 veterans a day to suicide. 365 days of waiting means losing a shocking 7300 more veterans to suicide before the federal government moves toward taking action. [We have ideas today.](#)

IAVA successfully fought for the passage of the [Clay Hunt SAV Act in 2016](#), but full implementation remains elusive. Congress has not yet released a number of reports from VA due in the fourth quarter of 2018 that would help inform good policy solutions we can pursue starting NOW, and a critical recruitment program for mental health professionals has not yet been fully implemented, negatively affecting the quality and timeliness of veteran care.

Congress needs to quickly pass the [Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act](#) and get it to President Trump’s desk for signature. This bill complements the work of the Clay Hunt SAV Act in several ways. The bill:

- Builds upon innovative suicide prevention initiatives, including IAVA’s recommendation for investment in non-VA organizations which provide non-VA mental health care through grant programs
- Builds on tele-mental health recommendations to more quickly get mental health resources to underserved areas
- Codifies VA healthcare for transitioning service members
- Expands the pilot program started under the Clay Hunt SAV Act to incentivize more mental health professionals to work at the VA and Vet Centers, including psychologists, psychiatrists, women Peer Specialists, licensed professional mental health counselors, and marriage and family therapists

“We don’t need to wait a year for the development of a road map,” said Butler. “Between legislative action and the requirements laid out in [IAVA’s latest policy agenda](#), we know what we need to do, we just need to come

together as a country and take immediate action.”