

[IAVA CEO Visits California Vets at Local VetTogethers](#)

Los Angeles and San Diego vets welcomed to join IAVA's community-building events

NEW YORK (April 22, 2015) – Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) CEO and Founder Paul Rieckhoff will be in Los Angeles Thursday, April 23, and in San Diego Friday, April 24, to meet with post-9/11 veterans and their families. In both locations, Rieckhoff will connect with members at IAVA's veteran community-building events known as VetTogethers.

California is home to IAVA's Rapid Response Referral Program (RRRP) and an estimated 244,000 post-9/11 veterans, making it the largest new vet state in the country. RRRP is an innovative approach to supporting post-9/11 veterans by directly connecting them and their families to local resources and to one-on-one support with IAVA's Veteran Transition Managers. Since it launched in the state in 2014, RRRP has helped more than 500 veterans cut through red tape and provided them and their families with access to services ranging across employment, education, housing, mental health and more.

"It's great to be back in California to see how far we've come and how far we have yet to go," said IAVA CEO and Founder Paul Rieckhoff. "This is the home to a very large portion of our membership, and I am thrilled to talk with them in person for these next few days. We look forward to seeing this community grow and unite further. With the launch of our 2015 member survey – the largest nongovernmental survey of Iraq and Afghanistan vets in the country – just this week, it is great to remind our West Coast vets to get their voice out there and be heard."

On Thursday, April 23, from 6-8pm Rieckhoff will attend a VetTogether at Public School 310, a gastropub in Culver City. Rieckhoff will also host local members at IAVA's southern California staff space at NextSpace, located directly next door to Public School 310. For more information, visit <http://bit.ly/1DJPMRn>.

On Friday, April 24 from 6-8pm Rieckhoff will meet with San Diego's local member veterans at RoofTop600, an event venue on the rooftop of the Andaz Hotel. For more on San Diego's VetTogether, visit <http://bit.ly/1GgGVkt>. Members of the media are welcome to attend both events.

More than 1.7 million veterans reside in California, including more than 244,000 who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. LA-area veterans face a number of critical challenges. According to a [recent report by the Associated Press](#), 8,456 veterans were waiting more than 31 days for medical appointments at the three LA-area VA hospitals. In addition, according to the VA, there are more than 14,000 pending disability claims from the LA regional office, of which more than 7,000 have waited more than 125 days for a claim decision. The

average pending wait time in LA is 151 days.

In San Diego, [according to Associated Press](#), 6,132 veterans were waiting for health care appointments for more than 31 days. Additionally, the San Diego regional office has more than 10,000 pending disability claims, of which more than 2,500 have waited more than 125 days for a claim decision. However, the average pending wait time in San Diego is only 91 days, significantly less than the national average of 131 days.