

[IAVA Demands DoD Waive Overpayment Penalties for Thousands of Soldiers](#)

NEW YORK, NY (October 24, 2016) – In the wake of [media reports](#) that nearly ten thousand soldiers in the California National Guard are being forced by the Pentagon to repay, with interest, re-enlistment bonuses awarded in wartime, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) released the following statement:

“It is unthinkable that these brave Americans who stepped forward when others did not after the 9/11 attacks are being left high and dry by their leadership,” said Paul Rieckhoff, Founder and CEO of IAVA. “Thousands of IAVA members have already taken advantage of the bonuses they received. The fact that our government would ask for it to be repaid with interest is simply unacceptable.”

In 2010, a federal investigation found that thousands of bonuses and student loan payments were given to California Guardsmen who did not qualify for them. **Instead of forgiving overpayments, the California Guard completed an audit in September 2016, requiring 9,700 current and former soldiers to repay all or part of the bonuses. It has also been reported that service members in other states are faced with similar challenges.**

“IAVA will not back down until this wrong is made right. We call on the Department of Defense to forgive this error and reject the notion that any servicemember should have to pay the price for failures of their leaders.” Rieckhoff continued, “We are also aggressively working with Congressional leadership to ensure that those who continue to point to ‘the law’ as a roadblock will no longer have that out.”

If you are National Guard member or veteran that is in need of help:

- [Contact DoD](#) to apply for a waiver
- Share your financial needs with [IAVA’s Rapid Response Referral Team](#)
- Share your story in [IAVA’s Virtual Veteran Hall](#)

If you are an American who is outraged by this news:

- Join IAVA in telling Uncle Sam to #PayThemBack by [signing our petition](#)
- Raise your voice on [social media](#) by using the hashtag #PayThemBack

IAVA is the leading voice of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans in Washington and communities nationwide. Led by veterans, our non-partisan advocacy work

ensures that Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and their families are supported, protected and never forgotten. Since 2004, IAVA has been a juggernaut in Washington, creating and driving the national conversation on issues ranging from Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) to women veteran issues to veteran unemployment. IAVA's dedicated staff in Washington, D.C. leads this work, advocating on behalf of our members daily. We also train our member veterans to be powerful advocates for their community.□□

IAVA is focused on results and has delivered historic impacts. Every year since 2007, in an increasingly gridlocked political environment and with an extremely limited operating budget, IAVA has passed at least one major piece of groundbreaking legislation for our community ranging from the Post-9/11 GI Bill (2008), to the VOW to Hire Heroes Act (2011), to The Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans (SAV) Act (2015).

See [IAVA's Advocacy Program Digital Hub](#) the full list of victories and to learn more about how you can help.