

# IAVA members protest a broken promise at Senate hearing in Washington

**WASHINGTON, DC (January 27, 2014)** – Ahead of a critical Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on military retirement changes and before the State of the Union address, veterans and military families will protest Congressional cuts to military benefits Tuesday morning. December's bipartisan budget agreement included unprecedented cuts to military retirees. Since then, groups like Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars have fought for a total repeal of the retirement cuts, arguing that Congress shouldn't balance the budget on the backs of those who have already sacrificed the most. IAVA members affected by these cuts will participate in a morning news conference with U.S. Senators Mark Begich (D-AK) and Dean Heller (R-NV), and then will attend the Senate Armed Services Committee hearing. IAVA Founder and CEO Paul Rieckhoff will also attend the State of the Union.

Tuesday's press conference will be held at 8:30 am in G-11 Dirksen Senate Office Building, near where the Senate Armed Services Committee hearing will be held.

IAVA called on President Obama to support repeal efforts during Tuesday's address.

"Congress is breaking America's promise with our men and women in uniform. These military retirement cuts are unprecedented and outrageous. Tomorrow on Capitol Hill, Congress and the President will hear directly from veterans and military families who are affected by these cuts," said IAVA Founder and CEO Paul Rieckhoff. "They can look our members in the eyes and explain why they voted for a 20 percent decrease in their earned benefits in a time of war. In the State of the Union, veterans expect to hear the President clearly state that he stands with us in opposition to these cuts. We need his support in pressuring Congress to fix this immediately. Our troops overseas in the combat zone are watching this issue closely. This is not the time for the President to be silent. "

Congress broke its promise to veterans with critical cuts to military retirees' benefits. As a result of the bipartisan, backroom deal made in December and included in the omnibus budget, Congress will reduce the annual cost-of-living adjustment for most military retirees and survivors, leading to a 20 percent cut to retirement benefits over the course of their lives. For a retired Army Sergeant First Class (E-7) that could mean the loss of \$83,000 in retirement savings.

IAVA Founder and CEO Paul Rieckhoff will attend the State of the Union on behalf of IAVA as a guest of U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY). In addition to calling on President Obama to support efforts to repeal cuts to military retirees, there are other key issues veterans need the President to

address:

- Fighting military sexual assault, particularly passing the Military Justice Improvement Act
- Passing advance funding for all of VA so veterans services aren't jeopardized by future government shutdowns.
- Recommitting the nation to combat military and veterans suicides at a time when at least 22 veterans a day take their own life.
- Re-focusing attention on ending the VA backlog, which still stands at more than 400,000.

"Veterans have earned more than a single line of gratitude in the State of the Union," Rieckhoff said. "After more than a decade of sacrifice, veterans need Congress and the President to take action on critical issues facing the community. "