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NEW YORK, NY (November 30, 2016) – Following is a statement from Iraq and Afghanistan Veteran of America's (IAVA) Founder and CEO Paul Rieckhoff on meetings in New York and Washington, D.C. this week between President-Elect Trump and his transition team on veterans issues:

"IAVA remains poised to ensure the true voice of post-9/11 veterans is incorporated into all strategies for the incoming administration. For over a decade, IAVA members have worked with Presidents and elected leaders from both sides of the aisle and we look forward to doing the same with the Trump Administration. We noted Mr. Trump's consistent advocacy for veterans during his campaign, are optimistic that veterans will be a high priority during his presidency and look forward to ensuring they will be.

"However, as speculation continues about his choice for VA Secretary, we are extremely concerned that President-elect Trump has yet to meet publicly with a single leader of any of the established national veterans organizations or The Military Coalition (TMC) groups. Instead, Mr. Trump's first publicized meeting on veterans issues was with the former leader of a controversial and partisan political group.

"IAVA and the diverse, trusted leaders of the VSO community have a wealth of experience and resources. We encourage Mr. Trump and all incoming elected officials to review our [Policy Agenda](#), which outlines in great detail the key priorities IAVA members nationwide want to see from his administration and VA Secretary. We also encourage him to meet with a broad range of leaders across the veterans space as soon as possible to guide his policy and the critically important selection of a new VA Secretary.

"After outreach last week from the Trump transition team, IAVA declined to sign on to a letter inviting other veterans groups from to a meeting scheduled for tomorrow in Washington. A letter of this type is extremely unusual, and IAVA was asked to sign on to the letter without ever seeing the text or getting confirmation about who would attend or be invited. Blindly signing a letter is something we obviously could not do.

"If President-elect Trump wants to convene a meeting, he should have simply done it under his own letterhead. As the incoming Commander-in-Chief, he does not need the signature of IAVA and other leading veterans groups in order to effectively convene a meeting. We are eager to share the perspective of our members tomorrow, but cannot allow them to be used as window dressing or political pawns.

"IAVA leadership will attend this meeting tomorrow and looks forward to offering our recommendations to the Trump transition team. We will also remain a tenacious non-partisan watchdog on Capitol Hill, in the media and on the ground nationwide—just as we have for the last eight years of the [Obama Administration](#).

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 local 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.