

[IAVA Urges Senate to Reach Compromise on Critical Legislation](#)

Washington DC (June 4, 2014) – Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), the largest non-profit, non-partisan organization representing post-9/11 veterans and their families, today called for bipartisan cooperation among Senate leaders to reform the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More than 40 bills to reform the VA, and improve benefits and services to veterans, are currently pending before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee (SVAC). This includes a revised version of the Majority's veterans omnibus bill introduced on Monday by SVAC Chairman Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and a new Republican proposal more narrowly tailored to health care access issues introduced on Tuesday by Senator John McCain (R-AZ), Senator Richard Burr (R-NC) and Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK). IAVA called for the Senate to advance all legislation that would garner filibuster-proof bipartisan support and would achieve real reform.

Earlier this week, IAVA CEO & Founder Paul Rieckhoff, joined by IAVA veterans from across the country, unveiled [eight steps](#) the Obama Administration and Congress can take now to restore confidence in the Department of Veterans Affairs. Among the steps are recommendations from IAVA's [2014 Policy Agenda](#).

"Veterans don't have time for political games. Reforming the VA requires a concerted national response – and Congress must play its part," Rieckhoff said. "The Senate can start by working together to pass key initiatives that support veterans and help ensure they get the care they need. With very little time left in the legislative calendar, our members and the wider veteran community do not have time for more rounds of political stunts.

Rieckhoff added: "This urgency underscores the need for presidential leadership, and why we need a Marshall Plan for veterans. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, House Speaker John Boehner, and House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi must sit in a room together and provide the bipartisan leadership necessary to support veterans."

IAVA is endorsing the Veterans Choice Act of 2014, sponsored by Senator John McCain (R-AZ), Richard Burr (R-NC) and Tom Coburn (R-OK). In the wake of revelations that the VA has been concealing excessive wait times at facilities around the country, it is clear that VA has an issue meeting demand. This bill will serve an emergency need to increase VA service capacity by temporarily authorizing veterans to get quicker care from approved private and community providers if, and only if, the VA cannot provide medical care to the veteran within a reasonable amount of time set by the VA or if the veteran would have to travel beyond a reasonable distance to receive VA care. While IAVA believes that a strong, sustainable, fully-funded VA is necessary for our country to meet its commitment to veterans, IAVA is also open to complementary solutions that augment VA's capacity and ensure that veterans receive the highest quality care possible in a timely manner.

IAVA is currently reviewing the Restoring Veterans Trust Act of 2014, sponsored by Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT). This bill is essentially a redesign of the previous IAVA supported veterans omnibus bill that failed to garner the 60 votes necessary to clear the Senate. Following that failed vote earlier this year, military and veterans service organizations, including IAVA, asked Chairman Sanders to work proactively and cooperatively with the minority to craft the re-do of the veterans omnibus bill that has a chance of passing needed reforms through the Senate. Unfortunately, substantive engagement across the aisle has yet to occur, once again rushing critical reforms to veterans care and education to failure. IAVA has made it clear to Chairman Sanders that a pre-negotiated agreement that has a chance of passing is a necessary component of IAVA's support of any further re-writes of the Senate veterans omnibus bill.