

# [Mom of Marine Lost to Suicide Calls On Congress to Pass Critical Legislation](#)

*Susan Selke tells Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee her son's appeal for 100% disability for PTSD was approved – five weeks after he took his own life*

**Washington D.C. (November 19, 2014)** – This afternoon before the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC), Susan Selke, mother of Clay Hunt, a Marine veteran who died by suicide in 2011, urged Congress to take swift action in passing the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention Bill of 2014. The bill (S.2930), introduced Monday and spearheaded by IAVA, is sponsored by Senators John McCain (R-Ariz.), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Richard Burr (R-N.C.), Roy Blunt (R-Mo.), Lisa Murkowski (R-Ala.) and Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.).

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) calls on Congress for urgent passage of the bill before the end of the year. IAVA members attended the SVAC hearing and held 22 flags – to represent the 22 veterans who die by suicide each day – as attendees entered the room.

“Not one more veteran should have to go through what Clay went through with the VA after returning home from war. Not one more parent should have to testify before a congressional committee to compel the VA to fulfill its responsibilities to those who served and sacrificed,” said Selke during her testimony. “The reforms, evaluations, and programs directed by this legislation will be critical to helping the VA better serve and treat veterans suffering from mental injuries from war. Had the VA been doing these things all along, it very well may have saved Clay’s life. We know that time is short in this Congress, but we hope that Majority Leader Reid will prioritize getting this done for our veterans before you all leave for the holidays.”

Learn more about Clay’s story and the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention bill [here](#). You can read Susan Selke’s testimony [here](#). Valerie Pallotta, mother of Joshua Pallotta, Vermont National Guard combat veteran who died by suicide in September, also joined Susan Selke at the hearing.

According to [IAVA’s 2014 Member Survey](#), 47 percent of respondents know at least one Iraq or Afghanistan veteran who has attempted suicide, while 40 percent of respondents know someone who has died by suicide, up three points from 2013.

“Holding hearings is great, but veterans and their families need comprehensive support – they need mental health care resources now. A week after Veterans Day when lawmakers rallied around the veterans community, we are holding them accountable,” said IAVA CEO and Founder Paul Rieckhoff. “IAVA urges members of Congress to step up and pass the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention Bill before the end of the year. We call on Majority Leader Reid and Speaker Boehner to get together and bring this to the floor for a vote

now. It's long past time to put our veterans above partisan politics. Combating suicide is not just an issue that the veterans community should be concerned about. Mental health care for veterans concerns all Americans, especially as our country continues to send troops to the Middle East. Twenty-two veterans die by suicide each day. Veterans need immediate passage now."

IAVA urges supporters to visit [iava.org](http://iava.org) and [click take action to sign the petition to support the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention bill](#). To date, more than 44,000 people have signed the petition.

IAVA connects veterans to mental health services, including partnering with the VA's Veterans Crisis Line to ensure that every servicemember, veteran, family member and provider knows that there is free and confidential help available 24 hours a day through phone, text and online. Veterans, or those concerned about veterans, can call 800-273-8255 and press 1 to be directly connected to qualified responders.