

# [New National Veterans Survey Underscores Need for Congress and President Obama to Combat Suicide](#)

**New York, NY (March 31, 2014)** – Coming a week after Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) demanded Congress and the Administration adopt stronger policies to combat veteran suicide, a new poll from the Washington Post and Kaiser Family Foundation found that 51 percent of post-9/11 veterans know a servicemember or veteran who attempted or died by suicide. The findings – similar to recent survey results of IAVA members – underscore the need for Congress and President Obama to take new action on the issue. Additional findings from the national poll of 819 new veterans, including many IAVA members, can be found [here](#).

Last week, 32 veterans from across the country were in Washington for IAVA's 10th annual Storm the Hill advocacy events – specifically launching a Campaign to Combat Suicide. In meetings with the White House, Congress, the VA and the Pentagon, they had the chance to share IAVA's recently released 2014 Policy Agenda for veterans. The agenda lists important issues and proposed solutions for some of the main challenges facing veterans who have returned from war over the last decade, including the number one issue of veteran suicide.

“This new national poll is another sobering reminder of how personal this issue is to veterans, and why we must do more to support veterans in transition. Combating suicide is the top issue of the new veteran community in 2014 – and it should be a top issue for the entire nation,” said IAVA Founder and CEO Paul Rieckhoff. “Some issues must transcend politics – combating suicide should be a bipartisan issue that everyone in Washington can work together on.”

The release of the survey findings carries additional meaning at IAVA as three years ago today, Clay Hunt – a Marine veteran, and past Storm the Hill participant from Houston – died by suicide.

As part of the “We’ve Got Your Back: IAVA’s Campaign to Combat Suicide” IAVA is calling on Congress to pass comprehensive legislation expanding mental health care for veterans and ensuring that they have extended access to that care. After Storm the Hill, IAVA is pushing for bipartisan support for S.2182, The Suicide Prevention for America’s Veterans Act (SAV Act) – historic legislation introduced Thursday by U.S. Senator John Walsh of Montana, the first Iraq vet ever to serve in the Senate. IAVA is urging all Americans to call their Senators to sign on as a co-sponsor to the SAV Act.

IAVA is also demanding President Obama to issue an Executive Order addressing the often problem plagued coordination of records and care between the Department of Defense and the VA and to appoint a National Director of

## Suicide Prevention.

Also last week, veterans and supporters placed 1,892 American flags on the Mall representing the number of veterans and servicemembers estimated to have died by suicide to date in 2014.□ According to VA estimates, 22 veterans and servicemembers die a day.