

On 9/11 Anniv IAVA Calls for Reauthorization of Zadroga Health & Comp Act

Protection of first responders essential in remembrance of victims and heroes

NEW YORK (September 11, 2015) – In observance of 9/11, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), the nation's first and largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization representing veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, calls upon Congress to reauthorize the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act for Ground Zero aid workers. The measure – signed into law in 2011 through a bi-partisan effort – offers medical treatment and compensation for first responders who became ill due to their time working at Ground Zero and the Pentagon. The act is set to expire in phases beginning October 2015.

“For many Iraq and Afghanistan vets, the attacks on September 11th instilled in them a call to service and dedication to serving their country. That one day changed the course of our lives,” said IAVA Founder and CEO Paul Rieckhoff. “Today, as the world recalls the shock of that clear morning 14 years ago when our nation was attacked and the 2,977 lives that were lost, we also reflect on the heroism of our first responders, service members and veterans. As a Ground Zero first responder myself, IAVA will always fight to ensure our heroes are not forgotten.”

In 2010, IAVA was instrumental in advocating for swift passage of the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act, passed in 2010 and signed into law in 2011. The act supports first responders, including combat veterans who aided in rescue and recovery, in the wake of the attacks at Ground Zero and the Pentagon.

“9/11 defines a lasting call to serve for a New Greatest Generation of millions of veterans and military families, with consequences stretching far beyond that terrible day,” continued Rieckhoff “More than ever, our country can't afford to turn our backs on the 9/11 families, first-responders and veterans who have answered the call of service. Since that day, over 2.8 million veterans have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, and their service continues today both at home and abroad.”

Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-N.Y.) and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) co-sponsored the introduction of the reauthorization act ([H.R. 1786](#) and [S. 928](#)) along with Sens. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Mark Kirk (R-Ill.). The act was named for a New York City Police Department officer who died of a respiratory disease that has been attributed to his participation in rescue and recovery operations in the rubble of the World Trade Center following the September 11 attacks. Zadroga was the first NYPD officer whose death was attributed to exposure to his contact with toxic chemicals at the attack site.

IAVA members will participate in remembrance and community services events at Ground Zero and nationwide throughout the month of September. IAVA's Rieckhoff, a 9/11 first responder himself, will join other first responders at the site in New York City for a moment of silence.

IAVA has also been selected for the first time in the organization's history to participate in the Cantor Fitzgerald Relief Fund "Charity Day," held to commemorate September 11th. The Cantor Fitzgerald Relief Fund, initially created to assist families of Cantor employees who were lost on 9/11, has since broadened its mission to provide aid to victims of terrorism, natural disasters, emergencies, direct service charities and wounded members of the military. IAVA will be represented by celebrity ambassador Bill Cowher, one of the most successful coaches in NFL history and veterans advocate and IAVA board member.

On Wed., Sept. 16, comedian and former Daily Show host Jon Stewart will join 100 first responders and survivors of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in lobbying Congress to continue the program.