

Veterans Call for End to Harmful Government Shutdown

January 10, 2019 (Washington, DC) Today, on the 20th day of the second longest disruptive and avoidable government shutdown in U.S. history, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), the leading non-partisan Post-9/11 veterans empowerment organization, called on Congress and the President to end the shutdown. [IAVA and leading non-partisan veterans groups fought the shutdown back in 2013](#) and worked to ensure that VA had systems in place to protect veterans in the event of a future shutdown. Today, because of that advocacy nearly six years ago, VA benefits and healthcare are [much less affected](#).

However, veterans who work in the other agencies, as well as uniformed services such as the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Public Health Service, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), have already been deeply impacted. IAVA urges Congress and President Trump to end this standoff and to restore funding to the all of the federal government immediately so that it can fully serve our nation's uniformed and veteran population and maintain our national security strength.

One third of federal workers are veterans even though just 10% of the U.S. population are federal employees. Based on [Office of Personnel Management data](#), about 155,000 veterans work at the agencies affected by the shutdown. And of those veterans, nearly 50,000 have VA disability ratings. [Veterans are already a vulnerable population](#), and this partial government shutdown can cause severe financial hardship for veterans—which sadly, often means mental health woes and potential for mental health crisis in our community, [where we struggle with alarming suicide rates](#). 380,000 federal employees are now furloughed; 428,000 are working without pay, including 41,000 members of the U.S. Coast Guard and thousands of commissioned officers in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and U.S. Public Health Service. Without proper funding, these families face the risk of falling behind on rent, loans, or car payments. This could jeopardize security clearances and potentially disqualify people from serving a career in uniform, through no fault of their own.

“This shutdown is terrible for America, terrible for our national security and especially terrible for our nation's veterans. It must end immediately. Thousands of veterans have answered the call from their government to continue to serve as civilians, and now, they and their families are being recklessly left out in the cold. And our Coast Guard is being shattered. The President can end this tomorrow. And he should. As our Commander-in-Chief, we need him to prioritize our needs above politics. Now and always. IAVA members nationwide are standing guard to protect and support the American people. They shouldn't have to worry about whether or not their next paycheck will be coming. The impact on our community has been devastating. And will continue to impact morale, readiness and recruiting for long into the future.” **said**

Paul Rieckhoff, Founder and CEO of IAVA.

Melissa Bryant, Chief Policy Officer of IAVA added, “Many veterans choose to continue their service to this nation after they take off the uniform. I know, I was one of those veteran civil servants for several years. I know firsthand the hardship our federal workers face when their livelihood is imperiled by a government shutdown.”

IAVA will continue to pressure the President and Congress to fix this mess until it’s resolved. Grassroots members nationwide have been mobilized on the ground and online to take action—and to support their fellow veterans if our government will not.

IAVA has also activated our dynamic [Rapid Response Referral Program \(RRRP\)](#) to help those veterans impacted by the shutdown. IAVA’s innovative social workers are trained to help veterans and military family members navigate all types of transition issues. If the government shutdown affects veterans’ livelihood or well being and they need support, our highly-skilled RRRP team will do their best to help.