

Vets Demand Pentagon Fix Bonus Clawback Issue Beyond California

NEW YORK, NY (December 16, 2016) – [Recent news reports detail](#) that the bonus clawback that impacted thousands of California National Guardsmen who were awarded bonuses in good faith could hit thousands more nationwide. This confirms a persistent fear that Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) had when the California scandal came to light and launched our #PayThemBack campaign. In response, IAVA sent a letter today to Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter demanding immediate action be taken by the Pentagon to before the next Administration takes the helm.

“It is unthinkable that thousands of men and women who have served our country bravely have to fear paying back the government this holiday season.” **said Paul Rieckhoff, Founder and CEO of IAVA.** “No servicemember or veteran should have to pay the price for the failures of their leadership, and IAVA will continue to be vocal on behalf of our over 425,000 members worldwide until this mess is cleaned up. It is unacceptable for this problem to be left to the next Administration to fix.”

Reporting by the [Los Angeles Times](#) shows an Army audit concluded that servicemembers from several other states could face repayment demands in states other than California. These individuals will sadly not be eligible for waivers under a provision in the National Defense Authorization Act for 2017 that was included to aid those in the California National Guard.

If you are a veteran in need, please reach out to our [Rapid Response Referral Program](#) team (RRRP) for assistance. We encourage all Americans to stay connected and informed via [IAVA.org](#) and the #PayThemBack hashtag.

Full text of the Letter to Secretary Carter can be found below.

December 16, 2016

Secretary Carter:

On behalf of the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) and our 425,000 members and supporters, I am writing to urge the Department of Defense (DoD) to take aggressive action toward resolving its bonus recoupment errors. We appreciate the DoD acting to immediately halt the recoupment efforts in California, and we welcome the language addressing the same servicemembers in the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act. This issue, however, is far from resolved and appears to span beyond California; more can and should be done to ensure justice is restored and this wrong is made right.

IAVA is asking DoD to resolve this issue before the next Administration takes the helm through the following actions:

1. **Release the data and information DoD has collected in regards to the numbers of service members affected.** We call on DoD to release the data resulting from the assessments of all states. Numbers outside of California initially were suggested to be “in the dozens,” but a new report by the LA Times suggest this is not the case. We cannot fully know the extent of this issue until we see hard numbers. Audits must be expedited, completed and data released for all states before the start of the next Administration.
2. **Halt recoupment efforts in all affected states, not just California.** Halting recoupment efforts in California doesn't go far enough. We know that servicemembers and veterans across the country are at risk. Until DoD releases the national data showing they have done their due diligence to define the extent of this issue, it has a responsibility to treat all affected by this error the same.
3. **Implement a proactive solution to quickly resolve this issue before the start of the next Administration.** DoD must waive repayment requirements for those who through no fault of their own have been asked to repay their bonuses, reimburse those who have already paid, and right the wrongs of those who have suffered financial hardship as a result of these collection efforts. This burden should not be placed on those servicemembers and veterans. They should not have to fight through red tape to fix a problem they are not responsible for. We need solutions for all impacted, not just a pause on collection, and that should not be a burden shifted to the next Administration.

This issue is of paramount concern to IAVA's members and the military and veteran communities at large. We are committed to seeking justice for all those wronged and look forward to your swift attention to our concerns and prompt action towards a solution.

Sincerely,

Paul Rieckhoff
Founder and CEO
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America