

[Ahead of President's Address to Congress, Veterans Want Answers](#)

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Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America Members Listen for Trump Plans to Reform VA, Protect GI Bill and Support Women Vets

NEW YORK, NY (February 28, 2017) – As President Trump prepares to address a joint session of Congress tonight, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) is calling on the President to follow through on his campaign promises on the issues affecting veterans and their families when they return home.

“Tonight, our more than 400,000 members will be tuned in to the President’s speech, waiting in hope that his big campaign promises to veterans will be followed by big actions. It’s no longer okay to offer just rhetoric; it’s time to get specific,” **said Paul Rieckhoff, Founder and CEO of IAVA.** “We want to know:

- Will you pledge not to cut the VA budget in this urgent time of increasing demand?
- What are your plans to ensure women veterans have the support they need and the recognition they deserve?
- Will you stand strong and protect the Post-9/11 GI Bill from any attempted cuts by Congress?
- What is your plan to decrease the number of veteran suicides?
- Do you promise to continue the Obama VA effort to eliminate homelessness among our veteran population and to increase mental health spending?
- How will you ensure new VA Secretary Shulkin is set up for success?
- How will you ensure the Department of Defense is a committed partner?
- What results can we expect in the next year?
- How can we (and all Americans) help?

“Mr. President, we often heard you on the campaign trail tout your support for the nation’s 22 million American veterans,” continued Rieckhoff. “Tonight, we’ll look to hear specifically how and if that support will be followed by action.”

Earlier this year, in advance of VA Secretary Shulkin’s confirmation hearing, IAVA posted online hundreds of questions from veterans and families nationwide. A comprehensive list of questions submitted by IAVA members [can be found here](#).

IAVA will continue to encourage the President and all elected officials to work with leadership from both sides of the aisle to ensure VA is best

equipped to care for all generations of veterans, including the 3.6 million Post-9/11 veterans. In addition, IAVA is advocating for him to focus on the top four policy priorities outlined in the [IAVA Policy Agenda](#):

Continue path toward a 21st century VA : For years, IAVA has demanded a 21st century VA: an organization able to find problems, respond decisively, and provide high-quality, timely access to care through an integrated network of care with VA at the core of this network. This is especially urgent for IAVA members who present new healthcare needs, more gender diversity, and significant geographic shifts. In the last two years, Congress, the Administration and the VSO community have truly come together to work towards this goal.

Lead cultural change to fully recognize the service of women veterans: As the fastest growing members of the veteran population, women veterans must receive the acknowledgement and care they deserve through the expansion of programs specifically tailored to support their needs.

Prevent Suicide Among Troops and Veterans: We must commit to combating suicide and improving mental health care for veterans through continued implementation of the SAV Act and commitment to actions such as recruiting MH professionals to VA, improvement to mental health care access, continued improvements to the Veterans Crisis Line and expansion of peer support programs. Veteran suicide remains a national crisis, with an estimated 20 veterans dying each day from suicide. The passage of the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans (SAV) Act of 2015, spearheaded by IAVA, was a landmark, bipartisan effort that showed America its politicians can work together, and that veterans issues are everyone's issues, but there is still much work to be done.

Defend the New GI Bill: We must also commit to defending the promises made to this nation's veterans by not harvesting established benefits, like the post-9/11 GI Bill, as a piggy-bank to fund other government programs. Further, we must commit to ensuring that those who have dutifully served receive the benefits promised to them, including National Guardsmen and Reservists.

For more information on IAVA's detailed recommendations for the President-elect, his appointees and all elected officials, see our [Policy Agenda](#).

IAVA is the leading voice of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans in Washington and communities nationwide. Led by veterans, our non-partisan advocacy, awareness and case-management support work ensures that Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and their families are supported, empowered and never forgotten.

Since our founding by Iraq vet Paul Rieckhoff in 2004, IAVA has been a juggernaut in Washington and nationwide, creating and driving the national conversation on issues ranging from Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) to women veteran issues to veteran unemployment. IAVA's dedicated staff in Washington, D.C., powered by a diverse and rapidly-growing membership, leads this work, advocating on behalf of our members daily. We also train our member veterans to be powerful advocates for their local community. IAVA is focused on results and has delivered historic impacts. Every year since 2007, in an

increasingly gridlocked political environment and with an extremely limited operating budget, IAVA has passed at least one major piece of groundbreaking legislation for our community ranging from the Post-9/11 GI Bill (2008), to the VOW to Hire Heroes Act (2011), to The Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans (SAV) Act (2015). See IAVA's Advocacy Program Digital Hub the full list of victories and to learn more about how you can help.