

As Two Blue Star Dads Face Off, Vets Look to VP Candidates to Focus on Veterans

NEW YORK, NY (October 4, 2016) – Today, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) is highlighting the unique status of both Gov. Mike Pence (R-IN) and Sen. Tim Kaine (D-VA) as “blue star” fathers, parents of Marines currently serving in the US military, at the first and only Vice Presidential debate in Virginia. IAVA, the nation’s leading voice of the Post-9/11 Generation of Veterans, also renewed calls for the moderator, CBS’s Elaine Quijano, to demand answers and policy plan specifics on the most pressing issues facing the nation’s veterans and their families.

“In the weeks following our historic IAVA Commander-in-Chief Forum, we have seen the national conversation about our veterans continue to move in a very positive direction. And tonight is the next major milestone in growing that important conversation. IAVA and its members call on both Gov. Pence and Sen. Kaine to confront the most pressing issues facing our community ranging from suicide to VA reform” said Paul Rieckhoff, Founder and CEO of IAVA. “This week, we will recognize the fifteenth anniversary of the war in Afghanistan and reflect on the sacrifice of those who protect our freedoms around the world. As fathers of Marines currently serving, both Mr. Pence and Mr. Kaine are in a unique position to focus the nation’s attention on that community and the 22 million veterans of all generations across America. These two candidates understand our issues on a very personal level, in a way far too few politicians do. And both leaders should make a concerted effort to present a clear strategy on how they’ll support every man and woman when they come home from war.

Rieckhoff concluded, “With only one chance to see the Vice Presidential candidates face off in a debate, we appeal to CBS and Elaine Quijano to ask the questions our community wants answers to, questions like:

- How would you stop the outrageous rate of veteran suicide in America?
- Would you support privatizing the VA?
- Would you look to keep or replace VA Secretary Bob McDonald?
- How specifically would you provide better care to our women veterans?
- Why did you choose to not serve in the military?
- What have you learned as the father of a Marine currently serving?

IAVA also encourages veteran members and supporters nationally to use the hashtag #IAVAVotes throughout the debate to focus social media attention on vets issues. IAVA members will be on hand in Virginia tonight and for all of the debates as a nonpartisan organization, challenging all candidates to stand with our vets and to ensure our voices are heard.

The first and only vice presidential debate will take place at Longwood

University in Farmville, VA at 9 p.m.

To stay up-to-date on both candidates' veterans policy positions, and to see IAVA's comprehensive [Policy Agenda](#) recommendations for all candidates, visit IAVA.org/iavavotes.

WHAT: [CBS News Vice Presidential Debate](#)

WHEN: Tuesday, October 4, 2016
9:00 p.m. ET

WHERE: Longwood University
201 High St, Farmville, VA 23909

WHO: [Paul Rieckhoff](#), Founder and CEO Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America

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

Since 2004, IAVA has been a juggernaut in Washington, 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. leads this work, advocating on behalf of our members daily. We also train our member veterans to be powerful advocates for their 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.

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (www.IAVA.org) is the leading Post-9/11 veteran empowerment organization (VEO) with the most diverse and rapidly growing membership in America. As a non-profit founded in 2004, IAVA's mission is to connect, unite and empower Post-9/11 veterans. Celebrating its 11th year anniversary, IAVA has connected more than 1.2 million veterans with resources and community, and provided more than 5,000 veterans with personalized support from IAVA's Master's level social workers.