

Clinton at VFW today. Trump tomorrow. IAVA reacts.

Veterans issues in spotlight to start DNC week

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (July 25, 2016) – As the Democratic National Convention (DNC) convenes in Philadelphia without a scheduled national security night, members of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) look to remarks made by Secretary Clinton today at the annual Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) [convention](#) as a barometer of her support for the 22 million American veterans. Veterans want to hear candidate Clinton address pressing issues such as education, VA reform, supporting women veterans and pushing back against negative stereotyping in the wake of shootings in Baton Rouge and Dallas. IAVA representatives were on hand at the Republican National Convention last week and are attending the DNC this week in an effort to push political leaders, delegates and American voters to support veterans of the recent wars. Candidate Trump is scheduled to speak at the VFW Tuesday.

“America is still a nation at war – on Saturday 80 people were killed in Kabul and yet this barely makes headlines back home. After over a decade at war, with ISIS growing throughout Europe and in the middle east, how is our next Commander in Chief going to support our generation of warriors for decades to come?” said Paul Rieckhoff, Founder and CEO of IAVA. “America has the greatest fighting force on earth, but as these wars move from the headlines, many have forgotten we still have troops on the ground and that the return home remains a battle for many. Secretary Clinton and Mr. Trump have a responsibility to keep veterans’ issues at the forefront of their campaigns.”

As a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, IAVA does not endorse political candidates of any party but will attend each of the conventions to urge candidates to discuss and support bipartisan veterans’ issues. IAVA’s assessment of both candidates positions on veterans issues can be found [here](#).

Last week at the RNC, IAVA staff led the media cycle on issues related to veterans and the military, including articles about recent police shootings in the [New York Times](#) and the [Wall Street Journal](#), the presidential candidates in a feature for the [Financial Times](#), and convention coverage on [CNN](#) and [MSNBC](#).

The military and veterans’ community are traditionally a powerful constituency at the polls. According to [IAVA’s recent membership survey](#), 93 percent of IAVA members are registered to vote. IAVA calls on both Secretary Clinton and Mr. Trump to integrate into their agendas four crucial measures to support America’s veterans and their families:

Defend the New GI Bill: The Post-9/11 GI Bill has been used by nearly one million veterans and their family members. In February 2016 Congress sought

to make cuts to the New GI Bill for the first time since this landmark legislation was passed in 2008. This legislation would have included \$3.4 billion in cuts over the next five years to the the Post-9/11 GI Bill, hurting military recruiting, retention and morale. IAVA calls on both candidates to pledge to protect the GI Bill from any and all cuts, as well as protect the GI Bill from for-profit school predators who would take advantage of veterans benefits.

Improve Care for Female Veterans: Nearly 280,000 women have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, and while the number of male veterans is expected to decline in the next five years, the women veteran population is anticipated to increase. Yet care and support for these women warriors has lagged behind. The VA health care system and disability claims system are still not designed to support the unique needs and experience of female veterans. While we have seen progress in reforming these systems, we call on Secretary Clinton and Mr. Trump to be more focused on getting female veterans the care they deserve.

Prevent Suicide Among Troops and Veterans: 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. Veteran suicide remains a national crisis, with 20 veterans dying each day from suicide. IAVA calls on candidates Clinton and Trump to implement the SAV Act by improving oversight of mental health programs, increase the number of mental health professionals in the VA, and swiftly address the stigma surrounding mental health to ensure timely access to the highest quality mental health care possible.

Build a Truly 21st Century VA: When the 2014 scandal at the VA brought to light a negligent log jam of claims and overdue health care, IAVA called for the creation of a new "Marshall Plan for Veterans." This bold, eight-point plan outlines a comprehensive effort to restore confidence in the VA. We urge the two candidates to resist the urge to politicize efforts to provide veterans with quality care and to implement all aspects of this plan, including the VA Accountability Act. Our military is the world's most advanced and our care for our veterans must be the same.

For complete policy recommendations, read IAVA's Policy Agenda [here](#).