IAVA-led Landmark Legislation to Recognize Service of Women Veterans Passes House

Washington D.C. – Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), the nation’s leading post-9/11 veterans empowerment organization, today applauds the House for its passage of the Deborah Sampson Act (H.R. 3224). IAVA has been the lead champion for Deborah Sampson Act since it was launched in 2017 and it has been the centerpiece of IAVA’s campaign to recognize the service of women veterans.

“The specific needs of women veterans are not being met,” said Jeremy Butler, CEO of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. “The passage of the Deborah Sampson Act by the House brings us one step closer to providing the equal level of healthcare and resources women veterans desperately rightly deserve.”

“IAVA has fought tirelessly to gain support for the Deborah Sampson Act since its introduction in 2017. We have conducted over 400 meetings with Capitol Hill offices, have met with Department of Veteran’s Affairs (VA) leadership directly, and have talked with numerous media outlets on the importance of this legislation,” added Butler. “We applaud Chairman Mark Takano (D-Ca.) and Rep. Julia Brownley (D-Ca.) for her hard work shepherding this important bill through to House passage.”

IAVA’s most recent Annual Member Survey revealed the need to focus on improving care for women veterans, who experience higher rates of suicidal ideation, mental health injuries, and financial troubles.

The Deborah Sampson Act aims to significantly reduce barriers to care for women veterans while also expanding services to address issues like reintegration, homelessness and newborn care. It includes provisions to address sexual harassment and assault in VA facilities and it establishes an Office of Women’s Health directly under the Undersecretary of VA for Health.

In addition to the historic Deborah Sampson Act being passed by the House, IAVA is also pleased with the passage of the Protect the GI Bill Act (H.R. 4625), which would significantly increase protections for student veterans. This common-sense legislation would allow military-connected students protections from VA overpayments, allow reimbursement for the GI Bill if a school closes, and give greater oversight of schools to ensure that student veterans are receiving a quality education with their earned benefits, many benefits that civilian students already receive.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill is an immensely popular program among IAVA members, with 93% of membership either having used or planning to use the benefit and 94% of members reporting average or above-average experiences with the
program according to the IAVA Annual Survey. IAVA led the fight to pass the Post-9/11 GI Bill into law and strongly defends the benefit from cuts and abuse.