

[IAVA Member Meets with President and VA Sec. at Phoenix VA Hospital](#)

IAVA leader underscores concerns about pace of VA reform

Phoenix, Ariz. (March 13, 2015) – President Barack Obama joined Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Bob McDonald, VA Deputy Secretary Sloan Gibson and Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) at the Carl T. Hayden VA Medical Center in Phoenix, Ariz., for a discussion on the agency's efforts to restore confidence within their troubled health care system. The President heard directly from local IAVA member veteran Cara Hammer Campbell, an Iraq War veteran, about the lack of available resources at VA for female veterans. Campbell was part an intimate roundtable that included representatives from three other veteran service organizations.

This visit marked the first time the President has been to the Phoenix VA – considered the epicenter of the 2014 VA scandal – since news broke 11 months ago about alleged wrongdoing and secret patient waitlists.

“As a Phoenix-area veteran, I came to this meeting with serious questions about what the agency is doing to restore faith in our health care system,” said Campbell. “The vast majority of veterans are committed to the success of the VA, and after today's meeting, I am more confident that the President and VA Secretary are on the right path after last year's crisis. I'm also pleased that Secretary McDonald is addressing the veteran community's concerns about holding toxic employees accountable and working to meet the needs of the growing number of female veterans. I look forward in the months to come to continue helping VA leadership best serve my generation.”

“Although it took 11 months for the President to finally make a visit to the epicenter of the VA scandal, we are pleased the highest level of government has finally given this issue the attention it deserves,” said IAVA CEO and Founder Paul Rieckhoff. “Today is just one step in a long road ahead. During the VA scandal our Rapid Response Referral Program (RRRP) team, saw an increase in demand from veterans needing help and they continue to fill the gaps in VA service. Secretary McDonald will continue to need the support of the President, Congress, and key stakeholders such as veteran service organizations to fully turn the VA ship around. The behaviors of VA employees at Phoenix a year ago and the recent behavior at the Indianapolis VA are unacceptable and underscore the challenges he faces in reforming the VA's culture. Although we appreciate the Secretary's commitment to restoring trust in VA, it will take VA leaders at all levels to embrace the “I CARE” values to change the culture at the VA. We encourage every VA employee, especially those who are veterans, to lead by example in their current positions like they did during their military service.”

IAVA was a leading advocate for post-9/11 veterans during the 2014 VA scandal and helped craft the Veterans' Access, Choice and Accountability Act. In May

the organization proposed a "Marshall Plan," an eight-point plan to restoring faith in the VA. Since Secretary McDonald took over the agency later last year, IAVA staff and veterans have continuously engaged with the Secretary and leadership on combating suicide, improving accountability and more.