

[IAVA Proud to Support Legislation for VA Motto Change](#)

Washington, DC (November 16, 2018) – Today, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), the leading Post-9/11 veterans advocacy and support organization, applauds the introduction by **Reps. Kathleen Rice (D-NY) and Brian Mast (R-FL)** of legislation to require the Department of Veterans Affairs to update its mission statement to one that is more inclusive of the many women who have served their nation in the U.S. military. **Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY)** will introduce companion legislation in the Senate.

The *Honoring Our Veterans Act* would change the VA mission statement to “To fulfill President Lincoln’s promise to care for those ‘who shall have borne the battle’ and for their families, caregivers, and survivors.”

The current VA motto is “To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan.” This motto is gendered and fails to recognize the sacrifice and service of over 2 million women veterans and their survivors, relegating them to the fringes of the veteran community. Many of the systemic issues confronting women veterans – inadequate healthcare facilities, mental illness, suicide – relate to a VA culture that does not adequately acknowledge their service and sacrifice.

“A long overdue motto change would recognize and support women veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors on the biggest level possible,” **said Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America Founder and CEO Paul Rieckhoff.** “This new legislation retains the heart of Lincoln’s historic statement while placing the outdated statement in the history books. IAVA profoundly appreciates the leadership of Senator Gillibrand and Representatives Rice and Mast, and we call on Congress to immediately act to make this historic change into law.”

“As women continue to play an increasingly vital role in our armed forces, they’ve become a larger and more prominent part of our veteran community,” **said Representative Rice.** “But unfortunately, the Department of Veterans Affairs mission statement simply does not reflect that reality. The brave women who have worn our nation’s uniform and their families deserve to be equally embraced by the motto of the very agency meant to support them. This bill will finally give women veterans the recognition they deserve for their service and sacrifice – it’s long overdue and anything less is unacceptable.”

“There’s no doubt that female veterans face unique challenges and healthcare needs that the VA has not yet been able to successfully address. Fixing this critical failure starts at the top and changing the mission statement is a needed first step,” **Representative Mast said.** “I also know personally that when I deployed to Afghanistan and was injured, it wasn’t just a challenge for me, but it deeply impacted my wife and our entire family. Acknowledging the ongoing needs of families, caregivers and survivors is another critical

improvement.”

This legislation is another step in IAVA’s groundbreaking [*She Who Borne the Battle*](#) campaign which is focused on transforming the landscape for women veterans in our country forever. And the change of the mission statement has been the centerpiece of this campaign in the 115th Congress. Although the campaign has borne successes in improvements made for women veterans, Congress has not yet acted to update the mission statement.