

[IAVA Testifies in Support of NYC Department of Veteran Affairs Bill](#)

NEW YORK (May 6, 2015) – Today, in an ongoing effort to hold New York City accountable for its 230,000-plus veteran community, Jason Hansman, an Iraq veteran and the Director of External Program Relations at Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), will testify before the New York City Council Committee on Veterans in support of City Council Bill S.314, which would establish a citywide Department of Veteran Affairs. The critical legislation, introduced by Councilman Eric Ulrich, Chair of the Committee on Veterans, and created in consultation with IAVA, has so far been opposed by the de Blasio Administration.

IAVA, the leading post-9/11 veteran empowerment organization with the most diverse and rapidly growing membership in America, is the only major veteran service organization headquartered in NYC, and boasts a membership of more than 10,000 area veterans. In October 2014, IAVA provided NYC Commissioner of Veterans Affairs Loree Sutton with a set of policy recommendations as a means to develop a comprehensive policy plan for New York City and its veterans. Those recommendations, which include the creation of a new Department of Veterans Affairs, can be found [here](#).

“Given our close ties to NYC, IAVA would like to see it as the leading city on veteran’s issues. However, to be this national leader we need a city level agency supporting veterans that is highly effective with clear priorities and goals,” Hansman will testify. While IAVA appreciates with work of Office of Veterans Affairs, “it is clear that this office is ill equipped to handle the breadth and depth of the issues veterans face in this city given its current staff size and budget. Currently there are more than 230,000 veterans that reside in NYC – and in a city budget of more than \$60 billion we only allocate \$600,000 to veterans services.”

For Hansman’s full testimony, click [here](#).

“IAVA would like to see genuine support for our community from the mayor and city council,” said Paul Rieckhoff, IAVA CEO and Founder. “It is simply unacceptable that with a budget of more than \$60 billion, the city currently reserves just \$2.50 per veteran, per year in the city. IAVA presented clear recommendations to the mayor’s representatives more than six months ago on urgent issues ranging from suicide to unemployment. And we are still awaiting a response or even a meeting to discuss these issues with the mayor.”

Last month, IAVA polled NYC membership and the overwhelming response was that the city is not listening to them. Only five percent of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the mayor is listening to our veterans and service members, and only four percent of veterans surveyed agreed that the

mayor was improving the lives of veterans and service members.