

[IAVA to VA Sec Shulkin: Use Your Authority Now to Change VA's Motto](#)

New York, NY (November 1, 2016) – Late yesterday, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) sent a letter to VA Secretary David Shulkin requesting that he finally exercise authority to change the VA's sexist motto before Veterans Day. In 1959, the head of the Veterans Administration, Sumner G. Whittier, established the agency's motto as: "To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan." As we state in our letter in our letter: "Every day that the VA preserves this motto, it ignores and obscures the needs of women veterans." IAVA first made this call in March well before scandals forced other institutions across the country to forced improve their cultures for women.

In IAVA's most recent member [survey](#) only 27% of women agreed that the public treats women veterans with respect. This statistic can't change until the VA itself changes, which can be jumpstarted by action at the top.

Full text of the letter, which also cites precedent for similar changes at American military institutions can be found [here](#).

The leading voice of the Post-9/11 generation of veterans, IAVA launched a campaign to transform the landscape for the women who served our nation, "[She Who Borne the Battle](#)." Launched not long after the "Marines United" photo scandal revealed shocking harassment of women troops in the military, the comprehensive campaign is anchored by the Deborah Sampson Act and a quest to change the outdated VA motto that excludes women.

As the letter from IAVA Executive Director and Iraq War veteran Allison Jaslow continues: "The VA's motto is outdated. By excluding women, it effectively erases the contributions by women in the military, and communicates to women veterans that they are unwelcome outsiders. It would mark a powerful commitment from VA leadership to create a culture that acknowledges and respects the service and commitment of women veterans."

IAVA's members have met multiple times with the VA Secretary and staff to discuss the need for a change to the VA's motto. Jaslow and other IAVA leaders (men and women) will again be on Capitol Hill this week and the days leading up to advance of Veterans Day, to encourage additional support for women veterans and IAVA's critical campaign.

In IAVA's most recent [survey](#) of our members, women veterans overwhelmingly agreed that being a veteran is important to their identity. Yet the majority of female veterans report a lack of basic recognition. Seventy percent did not feel VA adequately provides women veteran program managers, the staff whose primary role is to help welcome and guide women veterans through VA care. Overall, a mere 22% rated VA's support to women veterans as good or better. And these numbers are supported by many stories of women defending

their service to VA employees or receiving substandard care for their health needs.

She Who Borne The Battle: More than 345,000 women have deployed since 9/11. They make up 13% of IAVA's membership. Women are the fastest-growing segment of the veteran population and that trend will continue as the number of male veterans simultaneously declines over the next decades. However, many female veterans are left without the proper care to support their needs when they return from their service. She Who Borne the Battle will change this by providing a foundation of public awareness, local support and policy changes solely targeted at supporting and empowering female veterans. Learn more at SheWhoBorneTheBattle.org.