

Momentum Builds in Senate for Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for America's Veterans (SAV) Act

Fiscally conservative bill still delayed by anonymous hold from unknown Republican Senator(s)

Washington D.C. (December 11, 2014) – In the 48 hours since the U.S. House of Representatives unanimously passed the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for America's Veterans (SAV) Act, five new co-sponsors have signed on to the bill in the U.S. Senate. Despite an inexplicable delay last night in the Senate, during which the bill was held and not considered, momentum is building for the legislation, designed to provide access to mental health care for veterans when they return from the war.

The five new Senators signed onto the bill, which is now sponsored by eight Republicans and seven Democrats, include:

Sen. Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.)
Sen. Joe Donnelly (D-Ind.)
Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.)
Sen. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.)
Sen. Robert Menendez (D-N.J.)

The list of co-sponsors can be found here: <http://1.usa.gov/lsgzLXx>.

"Make no mistake, America's veterans are watching the Senate today. Even fiscally conservative members and veterans who are concerned about federal budget issues recognize that this small bill – just \$22 million over five years – is responsible, prudent spending that only begins to honor the obligation the government made to our vets when they put on the uniform," said IAVA Legislative Director Alex Nicholson. "House Republicans recognized and honored their commitment to vets, and we now are counting on Senate Republicans to do the same."

"Tragically, 22 vets will die by suicide today and every day that the Senate waits to pass this fiscally conservative bill. Even conservatives should agree, the Clay Hunt Act's price tag is a small one when compared to the price of our veterans' lives. The VA needs the assistance supplied by this bill, and supports its passage. The White House agrees this bill is necessary, and is lobbying for passage. With all Senate Democrats and most Senate Republicans agreeing to pass this bill, there is simply no legitimate reason for an individual or small group of Senators to delay its passage. We can't wait another day. Our veterans need this bill passed now."

IAVA members, joined by members of other Veteran Service Organizations across the country are engaged in a last minute push to call Senators to demand that this bill be passed before the 113th Congress adjourns this week.

For more info or to schedule an interview with Alex or the parents of the Marine who died by suicide and for whom this bill is named call 212-982-9699 or email press@iava.org.