

New Vets Participate in Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness

Washington DC (June 4, 2014) – Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), the nation's largest non-profit, non-partisan organization representing post-9/11 veterans and their families, today attended the Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness at the White House. IAVA Chief Policy Officer Tom Tarantino and Leadership Fellow Aaron Mankin joined other veteran service organizations (VSOs) to address homelessness within the veteran community at the Joining Forces event.

Many veterans struggle to maintain a permanent home. In IAVA's 2014 Membership Survey, 7.1 percent of respondents reported that they were staying with family or friends because they could not afford rent.

"Our veterans have made the greatest of sacrifices to our country with their service, and they shouldn't have to worry about having a home to return to once they return to their community. Homelessness is not a new problem for veterans. Generations of vets and their families have been on the doorstep of homelessness or experienced the pain of having nowhere to go. All Americans must understand the issues that lead to this preventable tragedy and provide transitional resources to anyone they call hero. We're proud to back the First Lady and Joining Forces for this vital discussion," Mankin said.

The Joining Forces event comes after IAVA CEO & Founder Paul Rieckhoff unveiled an [eight-point plan](#) to restore confidence within the Department of Veterans Affairs. Included in the plan is to support the recommendations of IAVA's [2014 Policy Agenda](#), which lists a series of steps to prevent veteran homelessness:

1. Identify and provide assistance to separating servicemembers at risk for homelessness.
2. Establish and fund partnerships between HUD, DoL, and community-based nonprofits, like Community Solutions, that will allow the VA to tailor existing homelessness and housing placement resources to shifting needs within the population at risk for homelessness.
3. Collect data about the number of homeless veterans by conflict-era in the annual survey of homeless veterans conducted by the VA and HUD.
4. Establish criteria to allow communities to shift Supportive Services for Veteran Families resources to prevention effort if they have ending chronic homelessness among veterans.
5. Regularly report demographic trends among homeless veterans served by VA, HUD, and other federal homelessness services to better inform existing homelessness programs.

6. Support best in class programs that are tackling veterans homelessness.

Marine Corporal Aaron P. Mankin – who attended today’s event – served as a Marine and was deployed to Iraq in several capacities, including Combat Correspondent. During an assignment on an 11-day combat mission in Northern Iraq, Aaron was severely wounded in an IED attack that killed six Marines. Aaron calls the transition period after leaving the military one of the worst times of his life. Marine Corporal Mankin was Operation Mend’s first patient in August 2007. Aaron currently serves as a Leadership Fellow for IAVA. Aaron has spoken at various events and corporations throughout the country. Aaron lives in Rogers, Arkansas with his two children.

Veterans and their families in New York and California struggling with housing issues can contact IAVA’s Rapid Response Referral Program (www.iava.org/rrrp). Veterans who call 1-855-91-RAPID (1-855-917-2743) or email transition@iava.org work with a designated Veteran Transition Manager who considers all of their needs and goals, and will work with them on those over the long-term. Transition Managers help veterans get connected to resources for any issues they may be confronting – from mental health issues, to financial struggles, to housing issues – and advocates on their behalf when needed, to ensure benefits are received.

#