

[New Vets Urge Passage of Clay Hunt SAV Act on Suicide Prevention Day](#)

New York, NY (September 10, 2014) – This Suicide Prevention Day, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) is urging the House to quickly pass the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention For American Veterans Act (Clay Hunt SAV Act), H.R. 5059. The Clay Hunt SAV Act increases access to mental health care, boosts the capacity to meet mental health care demands, improves the quality of care for troops and veterans, provides seamless care from DoD to VA and develops community support for veterans.

IAVA is also joining the White House, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Service Organizations, care providers and other advocates to spread awareness of mental health resources and to know there is help available.

The VA estimates 22 veterans die by suicide each day. Combating suicide is IAVA's number one priority in 2014 after launching the ["We've Got Your Back: IAVA's Campaign to Combat Suicide"](#) in March during Storm the Hill. According to IAVA's [2014 Member Survey](#), 47 percent of respondents know at least one Iraq or Afghanistan veteran who has attempted suicide, while 40 percent of respondents know someone who has died by suicide, up three points from 2013.

"Today, we urge veterans and their families in-crisis to seek help and know they are not alone," said IAVA CEO and Founder Paul Rieckhoff. "In September, and all through the fall, IAVA will continue to advocate for improving access to mental health care and combating suicide. We are encouraging veterans and civilians to get involved in reversing the suicide trend in the veterans community and support passage of the Clay Hunt SAV Act. Twenty-two veterans dying per day is 22 too many."

Rieckhoff continued: "This is not a partisan issue. Our country must be prepared to meet the mental health needs of thousands of returning servicemembers from the war in Afghanistan as veterans issues continue to slip away from the headlines. We urge Congress to follow in the President's steps and make combating veteran suicide a top priority. October marks 13 years of combat in Afghanistan. Our veterans have had our backs for over a decade, shouldering two wars, and we should have theirs at home. We hope as the election cycle begins, members of Congress will take up this issue and stand with the new greatest generation of veterans."

In late August at the American Legion Convention in Charlotte, N.C., President Obama announced executive action on mental health care and suicide prevention for veterans. The executive action was created in consultation with IAVA and includes new initiatives on raising awareness for suicide prevention, mental health research, pilot programs on peer support and more.

IAVA's [Convoy to Combat Suicide](#) will continue this week with Linkin Park shows in Irvine, California on Thursday, September 11 and George, Washington

on Saturday, September 13th. The Convoy to Combat Suicide [brings together artists](#) from a wide variety of musical audiences to stand with our nation's veterans.

IAVA connects veterans to mental health services, including partnering with the VA's Veterans Crisis Line to ensure that every servicemember, veteran, family member and provider knows that there is free and confidential help available 24 hours a day through phone, text and online. Veterans, or those concerned about veterans, can call 800-273-8255 and press 1 to be directly connected to qualified responders.

Note to media: Email press@iava.org or call 212-982-9699 to schedule an interview with IAVA leadership.

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (www.IAVA.org) is the nation's first and largest nonpartisan, nonprofit organization representing veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan and has more than 270,000 Member Veterans and civilian supporters nationwide. Celebrating its tenth year, IAVA recently received the highest rating – four-stars – from Charity Navigator, America's largest charity evaluator.

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