

Obama Town Hall Deepens Urgent Vets Conversation

WASHINGTON, D.C. (September 29, 2016) – In response to the town hall event with President Obama last night on CNN focusing on issues impacting veterans and the US military, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), the nation's leading voice for Post-9/11 veterans, issued the following statement:

"Last night was another historic step forward for the veterans movement. CNN and the White House created an event that helped educate millions of Americans and gave voice to many in our community who have been voiceless for too long. After starting the conversation with our historic IAVA [Commander-in-Chief Forum](#) on NBC earlier this month, last night's event underscored that veterans and military issues must be a priority for all Americans and especially for our President in the limited time he has left in office.

Rieckhoff continued, "Although most of America wishes this event happened many years earlier, and much more regularly, we finally had the chance to challenge the President on VA reform, veterans suicide, women in combat, respect for the national anthem and much more. The President underscored his personal dedication to our community and very effectively communicated the need to overcome the stigma of mental health and seeking care. Specifically, his strong and thoughtful encouragement of veterans to get help for mental health injuries will save lives. However, he still failed to offer a clear and convincing vision for the future of the VA and missed an excellent opportunity to clearly state his position on pending cuts by the Senate to our New GI Bill education benefits."

Rieckhoff continued, "With only a few months left in office, President Obama can still score some significant wins by partnering with the public, Congress, veterans groups and by Executive Order. And Congress must do their part too. Speaker Ryan and House leadership should put aside political point scoring and partisanship to work with the President to help."

Rieckhoff concluded, "The President is also in a unique position to unify all Americans around Veterans Day in November, just days after Election Day. We also hope that President Obama will commit to continuing to focus on veterans issues with Mrs. Obama after he's left the White House and for the rest of his life. He may be leaving office next year, but the massive challenges that emerged under his watch will endure for a lifetime. And veterans will need his help for the rest of his."

Following the [Town Hall](#), Rieckhoff joined [CNN Tonight](#) and [New Day](#) to provide reaction and analysis.

For more information on IAVA's detailed recommendations for the President, elected officials, candidates, philanthropy and the nation, please see [IAVA's](#)

[detailed Policy Agenda](#). This unrivaled roadmap for how American can support our veterans includes calls for reform measures at the VA, the prioritization of women veterans, cracking down on for-profit schools taking advantage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and implementation of the critical measures of the IAVA-led [Clay Hunt SAV Act](#).

IAVA is the leading voice of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans in Washington and communities nationwide. Led by veterans, our non-partisan advocacy work ensures that Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and their families are supported, protected and never forgotten. Since 2004, IAVA has been a juggernaut in Washington, creating and driving the national conversation on issues ranging from Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) to women veteran issues to veteran unemployment. IAVA's dedicated staff in Washington, D.C. leads this work, advocating on behalf of our members daily. We also train our member veterans to be powerful advocates for their community.

IAVA is focused on results and has delivered historic impacts. Every year since 2007, in an increasingly gridlocked political environment and with an extremely limited operating budget, IAVA has passed at least one major piece of groundbreaking legislation for our community ranging from the Post-9/11 GI Bill (2008), to the VOW to Hire Heroes Act (2011), to The Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans (SAV) Act (2015). See [IAVA's Advocacy Program Digital Hub](#) the full list of victories and to learn more about how you can help.