

[Post 9/11 Vets Call on Senate to Pass Critical Veteran Suicide Prevention Bill](#)

Washington, D.C. (December 10, 2014) – After passing the House yesterday by a unanimous voice vote, the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans (SAV) Act (H.R. 5059), critical legislation that will improve access to mental health care, moves to the Senate for consideration. Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) urges the Senate to stand with our veterans and move quickly in passing the bill. The legislation was spearheaded by IAVA and named after Iraq and Afghanistan war veteran Clay Hunt, a Marine who died by suicide in 2011.

“In the time since Clay’s passing, Richard and I have found many other veterans who share the struggles our son experienced,” said Susan Selke, mother of Clay Hunt. “While this legislation is too late for Clay, it is not too late for the veterans currently facing difficulty in accessing needed mental health resources. We are counting on the Senate to do the right thing tomorrow and get this bill passed.”

“No lawmaker should take issue with this vital legislation for our community,” said IAVA CEO and Founder Paul Rieckhoff. “With 22 veterans dying by suicide each day, the minimal fiscal cost of this bill can’t compare to the human cost of continued inaction. Our veterans need the Senate to pass this bill today so it can be on the President’s desk by the end of the year. We need leadership from both sides of the aisle to get this done. All of America is watching closely to see who is supporting us, and who is against us. Any victory is a testament to the courage and tenacity of Susan and our motivated local IAVA leaders nationwide.”

Since the beginning of 2014 IAVA has been the [leading voice for the post-9/11 veteran community](#), calling on members of Congress, the White House, Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense to address veteran suicide.

The Clay Hunt SAV Act will:

- **Increase access to mental health care** by, among other things, creating a peer support and community outreach pilot program to assist transitioning servicemembers as well as a one-stop, interactive website of available resources.
- **Better meet the demand for mental health care** by starting a pilot program to repay the loan debt of students in psychiatry so it is easier to recruit them to work at the VA.
- **Boost the accountability of mental health care** by requiring an annual evaluation of DoD and VA suicide-prevention practices and programs.