

Post-9/11 Vets Celebrate Progress, Continue to Oppose Historic Cuts to GI Bill

WASHINGTON (May 5, 2016) – Following last Thursday’s announcement by the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee (SVAC), Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) and its 425,000 members celebrated a major victory as SVAC announced that a proposed cut to GI Bill benefits had been stripped from a bipartisan Senate veterans omnibus bill. For weeks, IAVA has led a nationwide campaign to #DefendTheGIBill and eliminate these short-sighted and damaging cuts.

The House bill includes a 50 percent cut to the housing allowance provided to children who will have their parent’s Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits transferred to them. In a state like California, with the largest veterans population, such cuts would have meant a loss of \$2,058 to a family. After tremendous pressure from IAVA and other leading veterans groups, the Senate also jettisoned a plan to increase the years of service required for service members to transfer the benefit to dependents.

This progress is welcome, but comes alongside a troubling proposal that will hurt veterans. The Senate bill includes another \$3.4 billion in cuts to veterans’ Post-9/11 GI Bill housing allowances. This proposal is unacceptable has prompted IAVA’s continued opposition to the full omnibus.

“IAVA members and allies have been outraged and galvanized nationwide to #DefendTheGIBill. We hoped to be able to celebrate the Senate veterans omnibus bill in its entirety, especially after hearing that the cuts we had focused on for weeks were eliminated,” said IAVA Founder and CEO Paul Rieckhoff. “Sadly, that cannot yet happen. The Senate continues to renege on America’s sacred promise—in a time of war. This \$3.4 billion additional cut is unacceptable. If the Senate thinks we are not watching as they slash veterans benefits, they are mistaken. From the start of this campaign, IAVA members were clear: our leaders in Congress and the White House cannot justify taking care of all veterans by breaking their promise to our New Greatest Generation of veterans and their families. Especially as our brothers and sisters continue to fight and die overseas, the GI Bill is sacred.”

“After analyzing the 391-page omnibus bill, it is clear that it breaks Congress’ commitment to military and veteran families. A battle was won last week, but the fight is far from over. Congress needs to do its job without taking from one veteran to give to another. It’s outrageous that instead of finding ways to make veteran’s educational goals easier to achieve, Congress seems hell bent at throwing obstacles in the way. We also continue to be shocked that both President Obama and Mr. Donald Trump have failed to publicly oppose these absurd cuts that are an insult to our veterans that

will weaken our national security. The Pentagon depends on a strong New GI Bill for recruiting, retention and morale. Our troops overseas in combat can read the news, and they shouldn't have to see headlines about their benefits being cut back home," Rieckhoff concluded.

Since IAVA launched the #DefendTheGIBill campaign in March 2016, IAVA members have sent more than 18,000 messages to Congress asking representatives to oppose cuts to the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Over the past several weeks, IAVA has had over 100 meetings with Congressional offices in D.C. and in their home states nationwide, while IAVA members have [voiced their concern](#) on social media, in the [press](#) and directly to their representatives.

"As this fight continues, we also want to recognize those who have stood with us so far including Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA), Association of the United States Navy (AUSN) and Commissioned Officers Association (COA). And a growing, bipartisan group of elected officials ranging from Sen. Kelly Ayotte (R-NH), to House Minority Leader Pelosi (D-CA), to Post-9/11 Veteran Representatives Tulsi Gabbard (D-Hawaii) and Seth Moulton (D-Mass), to the New York City Council, to presidential candidates Sec. Clinton and Sen. Sanders (D-VT). They have all joined the nationwide chorus of Americans standing up for our veterans at this critical time. We will continue to fight until veterans benefits are fully protected. No cuts now. No cuts ever," Rieckhoff concluded.

The full list of Congress and presidential candidates who have stood up for the Post-9/11 GI Bill can be found at www.DefendTheGIBill.org.

IAVA [led the passage](#) of the Post-9/11 GI Bill in 2008 and in championing upgrades in 2010 and 2014. The Post-9/11 GI Bill has been used by nearly one million veterans and their family members to accomplish educational goals and chart new career paths. For more information about IAVA's campaign to defend the GI Bill, visit defendthegibill.org.