

President's Lack of Action Disappoints New Veterans

Washington DC (May 21, 2014) – Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) today released the following statement from Founder and CEO Paul Rieckhoff in response to President Obama's remarks on the growing VA controversy:

"The President's remarks today were a tremendous disappointment to America's newest generation of veterans. He did nothing to quell the growing nationwide VA controversy. His long-overdue remarks gave outraged IAVA members no reason to believe anything will change at the VA anytime soon. The public trust with the VA and Secretary Shinseki is broken. As a Washington Post survey recently revealed, nearly six in ten post-9/11 veterans say the VA is not doing a good job meeting the needs of veterans.

"This controversy is much bigger than Phoenix. And our veterans shouldn't have to wait a month for an investigation into one city as disturbing allegations have emerged in at least nine others. The controversy has now spanned to Fort Collins, Austin, San Antonio, Cheyenne, St Louis, Chicago, Gainesville, Durham, and Albuquerque.

"These issues are not new. Problems surrounding unacceptable wait times, delays and cooked books have been emerging for years. IAVA has been sounding the alarm for over a decade. After numerous GAO reports and dozens of public hearings, if you're not outraged, you're not paying attention.

"These issues were also predictable and preventable. But as we all learn in the military, failing to plan is planning to fail.

"Speeches and excuses will not solve this problem. Only decisive leadership, bold change and strong accountability will repair decades of failure.

"While the President continues to dither, Congress has an opportunity to take bipartisan action today by passing the VA Accountability Act. IAVA calls on all members of both parties to swiftly pass this legislation that is essential to empowering the leadership of the VA."

Last week, IAVA and the Project On Government Oversight (POGO) announced they are joining together to protect VA staff who come forward with information about agency wrongdoing.

As part of the effort, the organizations have launched a secure website, www.VAOversight.org, where VA employees can get in touch with POGO and IAVA. The effort combines IAVA's deep knowledge of the VA system with POGO's experience working with whistleblowers to expose federal wrongdoing.