

Promised Military Retirement Benefits Restored – But Veterans Warn Against Future Cuts

NEW YORK (February 12, 2014) – The Senate today overwhelmingly passed bipartisan legislation restoring cuts to retirement benefits for veterans who have served or enlisted before January 1, 2014. The bill passed the House of Representatives yesterday and now goes to the President for his signature. While protecting those who have served or are currently enlisted, the bill includes a COLA reduction for new enlistees, and would apply to those retirees in 2034.

Since Congress passed the unprecedented cuts to military retirees in December, IAVA has helped lead a fight with other veterans service organizations demanding Congress repeal the cuts and restore the promise to veterans. Not only did the budget agreement interfere with the work of a benefits commission that is currently underway addressing military retirement, it broke faith with those who have made sacrifices for the country in a time of war.

“This bipartisan action – rare in Washington these days – corrects the significant mistake Congress made in December by trying to balance the budget on the backs of those who have sacrificed so much,” said IAVA CEO and Founder Paul Rieckhoff. “It’s wise and appropriate that Congress has responded to the widespread anger in our community by restoring the retirement benefits of servicemembers and their survivors. But let’s be honest: Congress never should have put veterans on the chopping block to begin with. While we are pleased to see the restoration of retirement benefits for those who already have served, we are concerned that Congress has left future retirement cuts in place, and we will keep fighting until benefits for all who serve are restored.”

December’s bipartisan budget agreement included unprecedented cuts to military retirees. Reducing the annual cost-of-living adjustment for most military retirees and survivors would lead to a 20 percent cut to retirement benefits over the course of their lives. For a retired Army Sergeant First Class (E-7) that would have meant the loss of \$83,000 in retirement savings.

IAVA members have fought back against the cuts since December. Nearly 40,000 veterans and supporters have signed a petition to Congress and the President; veterans and their families have protested on Capitol Hill, attending press conferences and Congressional hearings; and IAVA’s policy team has held dozens of meetings with members of Congress and their staffs to broker a bipartisan agreement.

“Going forward every member of Congress should know that we have taken the unprecedented step of mobilizing tens of thousands of our members to guard

vigilantly against any future cuts to our promised benefits and we will be watching to make sure it doesn't happen again," Rieckhoff said.