

# Senate Passes Legislation to Fix the Department of Veterans Affairs

**Washington DC (June 11, 2014)** – Today, the Senate overwhelmingly passed bipartisan legislation, S. 2450, which focuses on solving the crisis at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), supported the bill, crafted by Senator John McCain (R-AZ) and Chairman of the Veteran Affairs Committee, Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT).

Passage of the McCain-Sanders compromise bill comes after this morning's news that the FBI launched an investigation into misconduct at the VA.

"IAVA is pleased to see the Senate move on critical VA reform legislation that will help restore faith in the VA," said IAVA CEO and Founder Paul Rieckhoff. "It's unfortunate that the first bipartisan veterans bill in more than a year and a half came only on the heels of a VA scandal where veterans may have died waiting for care. The spirit of bipartisan cooperation shown today must be the new normal. Now the Senate must act to pass the Suicide Prevention for America's Veterans (SAV) Act and other critical bills awaiting votes."

The legislation directly addresses accountability issues at the VA by allowing poorly performing SES employees to be immediately dismissed without pay while also establishing an expedited appeals process to discourage fraudulent dismissals. This legislation will also allow veterans to see providers outside the VA system if the wait times for appointments are too long or if the veteran lives more than 40 miles from a VA hospital or clinic. The need to address the VA's technological capabilities, particularly with scheduling, will also be evaluated through the establishment of a Tech Task Force. In addition to these access and accountability measures, this legislation also includes several other major provisions supported by IAVA's 2014 Policy Agenda, including much needed major medical facility lease authorizations, in-state tuition for veterans using GI Bill benefits, and increased access to health care for survivors of MST.

The legislation passed with a vote of 93-3. Senators Sessions (R-AL), Corker (R-TN), and Johnson (R-WI) were the three no votes.

Last week Rieckhoff, joined by IAVA veterans from across the country, unveiled eight steps the Obama Administration and Congress can take now to restore confidence in the Department of Veterans Affairs. IAVA urged Congress and the President to enact all of the recommendations from the plan.

**NOTE TO THE MEDIA: IAVA leadership is available for interview. Press can email [press@iava.org](mailto:press@iava.org) or call 212-982-9699.**

*Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America ([www.IAVA.org](http://www.IAVA.org)) is the nation's first and largest nonpartisan, nonprofit organization representing veterans of Iraq*

*and Afghanistan and has more than 270,000 Member Veterans and civilian supporters nationwide. Celebrating its 10th year anniversary, IAVA recently received the highest rating – four-stars – from Charity Navigator, America’s largest charity evaluator.*

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