

# Veterans Group to Presidential Candidates: Talk is Cheap

**IAVA to attend both conventions, outlines top priorities for next Commander in Chief**

**New York, NY (July 18, 2016)** – Today, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), the leading voice for post-9/11 veterans and their families, announced the top issues veterans want to hear from Presidential candidates Secretary Hillary Clinton and Mr. Donald Trump. IAVA representatives are attending both party conventions to push political leaders, delegates and American voters to support veterans of the recent wars. IAVA's assessment of both candidates positions on veterans issues can be found [here](#).

"A simple 'thank you for your service' won't cut it this November," said Paul Rieckhoff, Founder and CEO of IAVA. "After over a decade at war, our troops and veterans deserve to know: 'How are America's leaders going to support this new greatest generation now and for decades to come? Our veterans served our country honorably. Our next President needs to make them a top priority."

This Tuesday, IAVA will also be co-hosting a "VetTogether" in Cleveland with Twitter for local members and veteran advocates. More info on the RNC "VetTogether" can be found [here](#).

As a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, IAVA does not endorse political candidates of any party but will attend the conventions sponsored by both parties with the goal of focusing candidates to discuss and support bipartisan veterans' issues.

"We are concerned that as these wars move from the headlines, the American people have forgotten we still have troops on the ground and that the return home is a fight for many," Rieckhoff added. "We might be bringing troops home but we have to bring them all the way home. That's going to take a long time and Secretary Clinton and Mr. Trump have a responsibility to keep veterans' issues at the forefront of their campaigns."

The military and veterans' community are traditionally a powerful constituency at the polls. According to IAVA's recent membership survey, 93 percent of IAVA members are registered to vote. IAVA calls on both Secretary Clinton and Mr. Trump to integrate into their agendas four crucial measures to support America's veterans and their families:

**Defend the New GI Bill:** 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. In February 2016 Congress sought to make cuts to the New GI Bill for the first time since this landmark legislation was passed in 2008. This legislation would have included \$3.4 billion in cuts over the next five years to the the Post-9/11 GI Bill, hurting military recruiting,

retention and morale. IAVA calls on both candidates to pledge to protect the GI Bill from any and all cuts, as well as protect the GI Bill from for-profit school predators who would take advantage of veterans benefits.

**Improve Care for Female Veterans:** Nearly 280,000 women have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, and while the number of male veterans is expected to decline in the next five years, the women veteran population is anticipated to increase. Yet care and support for these women warriors has lagged behind. The VA health care system and disability claims system are still not designed to support the unique needs and experience of female veterans. While we have seen progress in reforming these systems, we call on Secretary Clinton and Mr. Trump to be more focused on getting female veterans the care they deserve.

**Prevent Suicide Among Troops and Veterans:** The passage of the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans (SAV) Act of 2015, spearheaded by IAVA, was a landmark, bipartisan effort that showed America its politicians can work together, and that veterans issues are everyone's issues. Veteran suicide remains a national crisis, with 20 veterans dying each day from suicide. IAVA calls on candidates Clinton and Trump to implement the SAV Act by improving oversight of mental health programs, increase the number of mental health professionals in the VA, and swiftly address the stigma surrounding mental health to ensure timely access to the highest quality mental health care possible.

**Build a Truly 21st Century VA:** When the 2014 scandal at the VA brought to light a negligent log jam of claims and overdue health care, IAVA called for the creation of a new ["Marshall Plan for Veterans."](#) This bold, eight-point plan outlines a comprehensive effort to restore confidence in the VA. We urge the two candidates to resist the urge to politicize efforts to provide veterans with quality care and to implement all aspects of this plan, including the VA Accountability Act. Our military is the world's most advanced and our care for our veterans must be the same.

For complete policy recommendations, read IAVA's Policy Agenda [here](#).