Legislation

* Sen. Murray’s (D-WA) *Homeless Veterans Services Protection Act (S. 1731)* passed the Senate Oct. 29. Prevents a VA policy from taking effect that bars homeless services for veterans who served fewer than two years continuously, or certain veterans who had less than an honorable discharge. An amendment was added by Sen. Heller (R-NV) to ensure that children of homeless veterans are eligible for services provided to that veteran by VA funded facilities. The bill must be considered by the House.
* House companion to Sens. Carper (D-DE), Durbin (D-IL), and Blumenthal (D-CT) *Military and Veterans Education Protection Act* (S. 1664), also known as “90-10 Legislation” to be introduced in the House next week by Reps. Takano (D-CA) and Speier (D-CA).

Hearing Activity:

* HASC: Review of DoD Transition Assistance Program - Focused on innovative measures being taken within TAP to assist transitioning service members. Also highlighted importance of service members utilizing programs such as Soldier for Life to specifically assist with the initial transition and development of key competencies.
* SVAC: VA Mental Health Care, Ensuring Access to Care - Jackie testified. VA, GAO and Committee both revisited pieces of IAVA's testimony, including the challenges with the outdated scheduling program (IT), telemental health, vet centers and cultural competency of community providers.

Legislative Meetings and Events:

* Minority Leader Pelosi/Rep. Walz VSO Round Table: Approx 35 VSOs and 15 Members in attendance. Focus of this quarter's VSO round table was on better delivery of health care to veterans. Tom Porter discussed IAVA's position in support of Choice and consolidation of care in the community.
* Meeting with Rep. Walorski (R-IN) - Lauren met with Martin to discuss IAVA's top four priorities/bills and policy agenda.
* Meeting with Sen. Donnelly (D-IN) office - Lauren, Bill and Jackie met to discuss IAVA's top priorities and policy agenda, and ways IAVA and Sen. Donnelly can work together on key issues such as VA accountability and mental health care.
* Meeting scheduled Oct. 30 with House Oversight staff for introduction.
* Porter attending Nov. 4 SVAC Vets Appreciation reception as guest of Senate Small Business Committee staff.

Key Events and News:

* Rep. Paul Ryan was elected as the 54th Speaker of the House. Legislative Team will reach out to meet appropriate staff.
* Before he left office, Speaker Boehner struck a deal with the WH/Dems and passed out of the House a two year budget deal and debt limit increase. In short, the deal makes long term entitlement changes, raises the amount available for OCO funds and amends aspects of the caps in place from sequestration. The Senate passed the measure early Oct. 30 and the measure goes now to the President.

Additional Notes:

* The policy agenda was sent to every Hill office with an emphasis on supporting the major priority bills.

Upcoming Week:

* Attending Nov. 5 Marcus Ruzek meeting
* Attending NPC lunch with Sec. McDonald