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**Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans Join Fight
To Protect Earned Military Benefits**

Washington, D.C. (September 24, 2013) – Dedicated to standing with the 2.4 million veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan from their first day home through the rest of their lives, the *Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America* (IAVA) has added its powerful voice to protecting commissary and exchange benefits. With a membership of more than 270,000 veterans and supporters nationwide, IAVA has joined [*The Coalition to Save Our Military Shopping Benefits*](#), which now represents nearly 1.9 million service members, veterans, and their families.

Military and veterans' service organizations and Save Our Benefit members have become increasingly concerned by proposals to end the commissary subsidy. Without this funding – which helps deliver the commissary benefit at a 30% savings – service members, veterans, and their families will pay nearly a third more for goods and products, equating to a cut in pay and undermining the financial readiness of our military community.

"IAVA is proud to join the Save Our Benefit coalition to protect this critical part of the compensation and benefits package that keeps our military families strong," said Derek Bennett, IAVA Chief of Staff. "Commissaries and Exchanges are a key part of the military community, connecting the youngest service members to military families and even local retired veterans. Protecting this benefit will ensure that veterans and their families have access to discounted, quality groceries and products that help military families thrive," said Bennett.

"IAVA is fighting everyday for our newest veterans and their families, and their support is vital to protecting these earned benefits," said Patrick Nixon, President of *The Coalition to Save Our Military Shopping Benefits*. "Commissaries and Exchanges are part of the solution to our Nation's budget challenges, not part of the problem – providing a great return to the Department of Defense on every dollar that is spent to provide this benefit," stated Nixon. "Commissaries and Exchanges also support several key White House initiatives – hiring veterans and military spouses, and promoting healthy lifestyles," added Nixon.

Millions of service members, veterans, retirees, survivors, and their families, rely on commissaries and exchanges to stretch their household budgets. Military families save thousands of dollars each year by using their commissary and exchange benefits. In remote and overseas locations, they are often the only affordable shopping opportunity available. In metropolitan areas, where prices are consistently higher,

commissaries and exchanges help keep prices affordable. For many junior enlisted military families and fixed income retirees, these savings are critical to helping make ends meet. Commissaries and exchanges are also the largest employer of military families in the world and the leading employer of veterans in the nation, adding to the financial stability of the military community.

IAVA is a 21st Century veterans' organization dedicated to improving the lives of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and their families. Founded in 2004, IAVA is the largest nonprofit serving our Nation's newest generation of veterans. IAVA is dedicated to supporting its members as they transition into civilian life, and offers programs improving mental and physical health, promoting employment and education opportunities, and building community among veterans.

We urge service members, veterans, and their families; concerned citizens; and organizations to join [*The Coalition to Save Our Military Shopping Benefits*](#) and to add your [voice](#) to help protect these critical earned military benefits.