



VETERANS GUARDIAN
VA CLAIM CONSULTING

The Honorable Mike Thompson
Chair, House Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs
300 W 10th Ave
Topeka, Kansas 66612

February 3, 2025

Dear Chairman Thompson and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Veterans Guardian VA Claim Consulting LLC (Veterans Guardian), the largest Veteran-owned and operated Veteran disability benefits company in the country, we write in support of Kansas House Bill 2214.

KS HB 2214 would preserve the rights of a Veteran to choose how they pursue their own US Department of Veterans' Affairs disability claim and address the full spectrum of the issues at hand. This bill provides additional oversight and protections for the Veteran while preserving their Constitutional rights to petition their government in a manner they see fit, and ensuring Veterans have access to diverse options and effective solutions for decades to come.

Veterans Guardian is a private Veteran disability claim consulting company owned and operated by Veterans, spouses of veterans, and spouses of active-duty service members. We fully support the goal of ensuring Veterans have access to a diverse set of options to help them secure the benefits they have earned. We proudly serve more than 45,000 Veterans annually. We assist Veterans with receiving the disability benefits they have earned through their honorable service, achieving a success rate of greater than 90%, in an average of 85 days. This is far below the Veterans Administration average processing time of 150 days.

Trapping Veterans in a backlogged appeals system only benefiting a handful of attorneys is something Veterans Guardian aims to avoid by focusing on getting claims done correctly the first time. The current US Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) disability benefits system is at best cumbersome and adversarial, and at worst broken to a point where it harms the Veterans for the benefit of a small number of powerful boutique law firms. In fact, in recent US Congressional testimony, Kenneth Arnold, Acting Chairman of the Board of Veterans' Appeals testified under oath:

"The [VA] courts clerk annually approved 6,500 to 7,300 attorney fee requests each year, almost all for remanded cases. This generates \$45 to \$50 million in attorney's fees each year, with the majority going to a small number of boutique law firms with relatively few Veterans receiving any increase in their monthly compensation."

If passed, KS HB 2214 will help alleviate the problems with the current system and could help decrease the ever-growing backlog of claims processed through VSOs and perversely incentivized attorneys. KS HB 2214 secures the opportunity of Veterans to seek expert help with a wide variety of claims and could help them avoid the Veterans Administration appeals trap.

There is momentum building at the federal level in the United States Congress to reform the accreditation process for third party actors, like Veterans Guardian, that help Veterans achieve the full disability benefits they have earned. There are more than 18 million veterans in America, but only 5 million have a disability rating. While actors such as VSOs and law firms also serve veterans, more options, not less, are needed to effectively meet the demand of American Veterans.

KS HB 2214 preserves a Veteran's right to choose how they pursue their claim and implements necessary reforms that must take place to ensure the integrity of the systems and to protect Veterans from potentially bad actors. Some of these reforms include, but are not limited to:

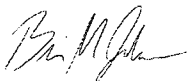
- o Mandating any fees are purely contingent upon a successful outcome and are not to exceed 5x the monthly increase;
- o Prohibiting any initial or non-refundable fees;
- o Mandating that presumptive period Veterans be referred to a VSO of their choice;
- o Getting written confirmation from the veteran they have been informed of their free options;
- o Prohibiting the use of international call centers or data centers for processing Veteran's personal information;
- o Prohibiting aggressive and direct solicitation;
- o Prohibiting advertising or guaranteeing a successful outcome;
- o Mandating the use of HIPPA compliant servers; and other protections.

These are true protections that will ensure the Veteran is not taken advantage of, while still preserving their rights to seek expert claims support.

The demand for current services in this space is far too vast for the government and VSOs to handle on their own. This highlights the need for an enhanced system that provides an expanded pathway for accreditation at the federal level and enhanced oversight against bad practices at the state level – KS HB 2214 does just that!

I would encourage your staff to contact me at Brian.Johnson@vetsguardian.com to set up a meeting to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,



Brian M. Johnson
Executive Vice President, Government & Public Affairs
Washington, DC Office

