

*****Consumer Alert*** Attorney General Raoul Urges Veterans To Be On Alert For Scams During Veterans Day**

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CHICAGO - Attorney General Kwame Raoul is warning veterans, spouses and family members to be on the lookout for scammers this Veterans Day. With the recent passing of the Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act, which expands U.S.

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits and health care for veterans exposed to military toxins, Raoul warns veterans that they may be targeted due to their eligibility to receive monetary benefits or other VA benefits.

Along with VA benefits, Raoul said veterans are often victim to other frauds, scams or identity theft. A recent report by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) disclosed that more than 162,000 reports of various frauds or scams were filed by veterans and military retirees, resulting in a total loss of \$177 million in 2021.

“On Veterans Day and every day, my office is dedicated to ensuring veterans and their families receive the benefits they have earned through their military service,” Raoul said. “I encourage veterans and military families to visit my office’s website or check our free Benefits for Illinois Veterans Guide for information about how to access the services they deserve and to protect themselves and their families from scammers.”

Attorney General Raoul recommends veterans and their families consider the following tips to avoid scams:

- Know that most government agencies will initiate contact through official letters sent by mail – not by phone, email, text message or direct message through social media.
- Do not send payments by wire transfers or gift cards.
- Do not be afraid to ask questions:
 - What is the organization and what does it do?
 - How did you get my information?
 - Why are you contacting me?
- Do not donate to an organization that requires you to make a donation before it will send written information about the charity.
- Prior to making a charitable donation, make sure the charity is registered with the Illinois Attorney General’s office by using the Attorney General’s [Charitable Trust Database search](#) tool or by contacting the office’s [Charitable Trust Bureau](#).
- Do not feel pressured to make a donation right away. Take time to do some research.

Attorney General Raoul recommends veterans and their families know the following information when filing VA claims:

- All veteran service officers, claims agents and attorneys who assist claimants in the preparation, presentation and prosecution of claims for VA benefits must be accredited through the VA Office of General Counsel. You can validate the credentials of anyone offering to file claims for VA benefits by using the [Office of General Counsel’s accreditation search](#) tool.

- Attorneys' fees are regulated by federal statute, which outlines whether, when and how much the attorney may charge for their services and assistance.
- It is illegal for an accredited veteran service officer to accept any form of payment for their services or assistance to veterans attempting to obtain VA benefits.
- All forms needed to file for VA benefits are available free on the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs' [website](#).
- The VA does not charge for any assistance provided in the preparation, presentation or processing of claims for VA benefits or services.
- Exercise caution if you receive an unsolicited offer of assistance from an unknown provider.

Raoul said veterans who need help locating an accredited individual, would like information about a benefit, or have been a victim or target by a suspected fraud or scam to contact the Attorney General's [Military and Veterans Rights Bureau](#) or call the Military and Veterans Rights Helpline at 1-800-382-3000. While the bureau does not file VA claims, the office publishes a [Benefits for Illinois Veterans Guide](#) that veterans and their families may find helpful in learning about VA benefits and available resources.

Veterans can also can file complaints against charities with the Attorney General's [Charitable Trust Bureau](#).