

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

CHAIRMAN MIKE BOST

HR 1663 – Veteran Scam and Fraud Evasion (VSAFE) Act – Rep. Calvert

Background:

In 2021, The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) estimated that military personnel, veterans, and their families were defrauded of approximately \$267 million¹. Additionally, internet schemes are up 71% from 2017, and one of the difficult aspects of this issue to solve is that fraud is constantly evolving. Unfortunately, modern technology has made it easier for bad actors to find new ways to trick veterans and their families. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) must be equally vigilant and responsive to help prevent veterans from being defrauded.

Currently VA has many offices working to combat fraud and scam attempts. However, the offices' efforts fail to utilize standard forms of communication and do not effectively coordinate VA's response with the government-wide approach that the FTC, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and the White House may take to prevent scams.

The VSAFE Act would establish a Veteran Scam and Fraud Evasion Officer at VA and would lay out the responsibilities of the officer. The officer would be responsible for establishing consistent guidance, providing up-to-date information to veterans and their families, monitoring fraud and scam metrics, developing training plans for VA employees who are designated to assist veterans who become victims of fraud, and working with other Federal agencies.

The Message:

- *The VSAFE Act* would establish an office within the Department of Veterans Affairs that would be responsible for providing consistent guidance, up-to-date information to veterans and their families, and monitor fraud and scams to ensure that veterans' and their VA benefits are safeguarded.
- *The VSAFE Act* would streamline VA communications to veterans and centralize efforts and operations to ensure that veterans are notified immediately when their benefits could be at risk.
- Protecting veterans' hard-earned benefits should be a top priority for VA, regardless of how sophisticated the threat becomes.

¹ Report: Federal Trade Commission, *FTC Details Its Enforcement Actions to Crack Down on Fraud Against the Military Community in Testimony Before House Oversight Subcommittee* (July 13, 2022), <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2022/07/ftc-details-its-enforcement-actions-crack-down-fraud-against-military-community-testimony-house>