VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

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Summer 2026

From the Chairman's Desk

MVA Spring Recap: Advocacy, Outreach, and Community Support

Since publishing our spring newsletter, Military Veterans Advocacy has been busy continuing our mission through education, outreach, fundraising, and direct engagement on the issues that matter most to veterans and their families.

On April 20, MVA hosted our Veterans Law CLE Seminar at Sedras Bistro in Louisiana. The seminar was well attended, bringing together attorneys and veterans interested in better understanding veterans' claims, the appeals process, and the legal issues that affect those who have served. We are grateful to everyone who attended and helped make the event a success.

Fighting for Veterans Benefits

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Just a few days later, on April 25, MVA participated in the 5th Annual Crawfish Cook-Off for the Corps at the Pontchartrain Yacht Club in Mandeville. Even with a little wet weather from a rainy week, the event was a great opportunity to connect with local veterans, sell Rifle Raffle tickets, and enjoy plenty of crawfish with the community.

We are still selling Rifle Raffle tickets. The drawing will be held on June 13, 2026, during Breakfast with the Best at T'Le Blanc's Creole Kitchen, located at 797 Robert Blvd. in Slidell. Doors open at 8:30 a.m., and breakfast will be served at 9:00 a.m. Guests can look forward to Warren's famous French toast casserole, along with remarks from special guests Slidell Mayor Randy Fandal and St. Tammany Parish President Mike Cooper. There is still time to purchase raffle tickets, and those interested can visit our website for more information.

We were also honored to receive a Silver Sponsorship on GiveNOLA Day from Gordon Holmes. Support like this helps strengthen our ability to continue advocating for veterans at the local, state, and national levels.

In May, MVA Chairman Jim Kuiken and Executive Director John Wells traveled to Washington, D.C., where they met with U.S. Congresswoman Debbie Dingell and spoke with Senator David McCormick of Pennsylvania and Senator Bill Cassidy about key veteran benefit issues Topics included herbicide exposure, suicide prevention, VA

appeals reform, and the ongoing problem of "claim sharks" taking advantage of veterans seeking benefits.

As we move into summer, MVA has launched our Double Down for Veterans fundraiser.

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Through this matching campaign, every dollar donated will be matched up to $7,200, doubling the impact of each contribution. This is a meaningful opportunity for supporters to help MVA continue fighting for veterans and their families.

We are thankful for everyone who has attended an event, purchased a raffle ticket, made a donation, volunteered, or helped share our mission. Your support allows Military Veterans Advocacy to continue working toward real change for those who served.

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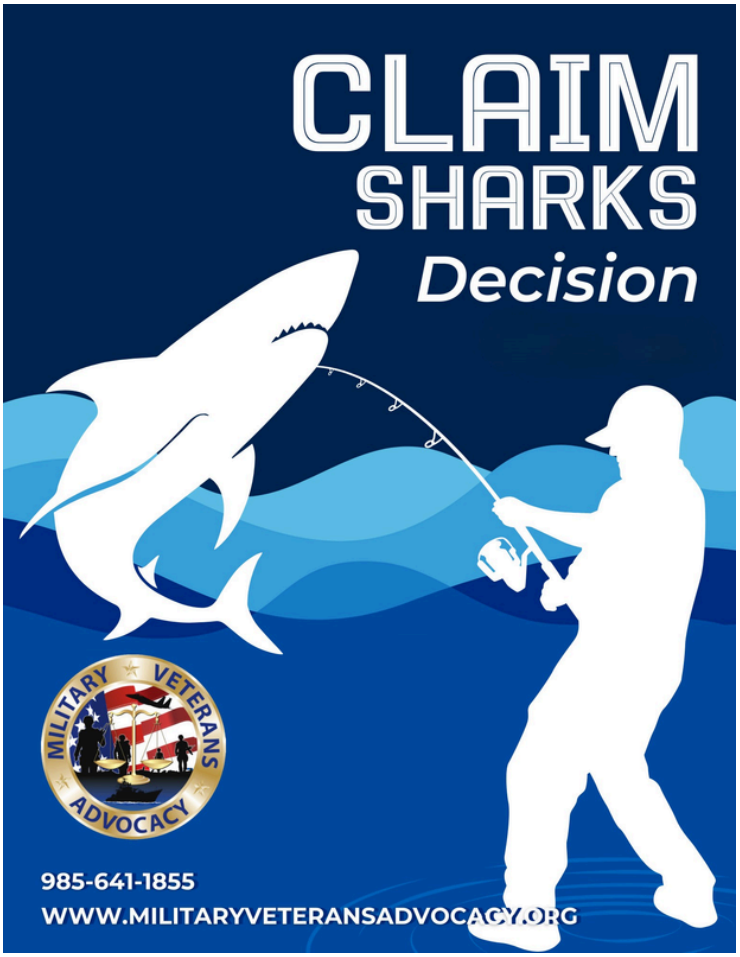
Court Ruling Reinforces Concerns About Unaccredited Claims Companies

A recent federal court ruling out of the Middle District of North Carolina reinforces a major concern for veterans and advocates: unaccredited companies charging veterans for help with VA disability claims.

In Ford, Beard, and Otters v. Veterans Guardian VA Claim Consulting, LLC, the Court found that Veterans Guardian acted as an unaccredited agent by preparing and presenting VA disability claims on behalf of veterans while charging fees for those services. The Court noted that federal law requires individuals or entities assisting with the preparation or presentation of VA claims to be accredited by the VA.



In its ruling, the Court stated that the evidence was undisputed that Veterans Guardian was not accredited, prepared claims forms on behalf of veterans, presented disability claims to the VA for decision, and charged fees for doing so. The Court found that these actions violated federal law and granted the plaintiffs' motion for summary judgment on that issue.

This ruling is significant because it addresses the ongoing issue of "claim sharks" and other unaccredited companies that charge veterans for services that may violate federal law. Veterans seeking help with disability claims should be cautious and make sure they are working with VA-accredited representatives, attorneys, or Veterans Service Organizations.

Recently Louisiana Legislature shut down an effort by claims shark supporters to pass another bill that would have allowed these unqualified and uncertified entities to practice veterans law. MVA was at the forefront of the effort to stymie those who would allow our veterans to be preyed upon.

MVA will continue to monitor developments and advocate for stronger protections.

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Memorial Day Message 2026

John B Wells
Commander, USN (ret)
Executive Director

The United States is at war. I have said that too many times in recent years, yet it remains the truth. It is no longer useful to debate how we arrived at this moment. What matters now is that we stand united, support our troops, and face the reality before us. The war is here. We must fight it—or withdraw and leave the world in an even more dangerous state than we found it.

Since the end of February, thirteen American service members have been confirmed killed. Six perished in the crash of a refueling aircraft; seven were lost in Iranian attacks across the region. We have also lost multiple aircraft—four F-15s, an A-10, a KC-135, two MC-130s, and an E-3 Sentry—and as many as 400 have been wounded, some gravely. Even now, American service members are fighting for their lives. We pray they all return home.

We must also remember the two National Guard members shot down in the streets of Washington, D.C., just blocks from the White House—outside a metro station I use often. Sarah Beckstrom did not survive. Andrew Wolfe continues to recover.

Equipment can be replaced. Lives cannot. As our Lord teaches, every person is a unique creation of God. These men and women cannot be replaced—only remembered. And they **must** be remembered.

Those We Lost in Kuwait

- Capt. Cody A. Khork, 35, Winter Haven, Florida
- Sgt. 1st Class Nicole M. Amor, 39, White Bear Lake, Minnesota
- Sgt. 1st Class Noah L. Tietjens, 42, Bellevue, Nebraska
- Sgt. Declan J. Coady, 20, West Des Moines, Iowa (posthumously promoted)
- Maj. Jeffrey R. O'Brien, 45, Waukee, Iowa
- Chief Warrant Officer 3 Robert M. Marzan, 54, Sacramento, California

All six served in the 103rd Sustainment Command and were killed when an Iranian drone struck a fortified tactical operations center in Kuwait.

Those We Lost in Iraq

- Maj. John A. Klinner, 33, Auburn, Alabama
- Capt. Ariana G. Savino, 31, Covington, Washington
- Tech. Sgt. Ashley B. Pruitt, 34, Bardstown, Kentucky

Let's Connect

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- Capt. Seth R. Koval, 38, Stoutsville, Ohio
- Capt. Curtis J. Angst, 30, Columbus, Ohio
- Tech. Sgt. Tyler H. Simmons, 28, Columbus, Ohio

These six airmen died when their KC-135 crashed over friendly airspace during Operation Epic Fury.

Additional Loss

- Sgt. Benjamin N. Pennington, 26, Glendale, Kentucky Died March 8 from injuries sustained during an enemy attack at Prince Sultan Air Base, Saudi Arabia.

Remember their names and pray for their souls.

Since April 19, 1775, our nation has lost 666,447 Americans in combat and another 673,831 to non-combat causes while in service—a total of 1,308,468 lives. These are not statistics. Each number represents a life cut short: husbands and wives, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, parents and friends.

Today marks the beginning of summer, but far more importantly, it is a day to honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice. As you gather with family or light the grill, take a moment to remember those who died so that freedom might endure. Remember also those who suffer unseen wounds—Agent Orange, burn pits, traumatic brain injuries, post-traumatic stress—and those who lost their battle to despair and took their own lives.

Join me in prayer: *"Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls, and the souls of all the faithful departed, rest in peace. Amen."*

We are at war—all of us. Democrats, Republicans, Independents, and every other voice in this nation. As we mark the 250th anniversary of America's founding, we must stand together to honor those who have died in service. We cannot allow partisanship to divide us or distract us from the sacrifices of the past—or those yet to come. War will always be with us. More will die. More will suffer. Let us ensure their sacrifices are never in vain.

Thank you for being here. God bless you. God bless all who have served. And God bless the United States of America.

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www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org/fundraiser.html

charity.pledgeit.org/MVA-Rifle-Raffle-Spring-2026

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