

**SUBMITTED TESTIMONY OF JOHN H. BLOMSTROM**  
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**VETERANS GUARDIAN VA CLAIM CONSULTING, LLC**  
**BEFORE THE MINNESOTA STATE SENATE**  
**AGRICULTURE, VETERANS, BROADBAND, AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**  
**MARCH 3, 2025**  
**OPENING STATEMENT IN OPPOSITION TO SF 1894**

**I. Introduction**

Chairman Putnam, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SF 1894, a bill that would significantly impact how Veterans in Veterans can access support for their VA disability claims.

My name is John Blomstrom, and I serve as the Manager of Government and Public Affairs for Veterans Guardian VA Claim Consulting, LLC. I am also a United States Marine Corps Veteran who proudly served in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

I am a native midwesterner who comes from a long line of men and women who have served our country. I am here to ensure that Veterans have a right to choose and that their choice is protected. Ensuring that our Veterans receive the benefits they have earned is a cause that is deeply personal to me.

Like many service members, when I transitioned out of the Marine Corps, I struggled to navigate the VA disability benefits system. The process was cumbersome, confusing, and inaccessible. Unfortunately, too many Veterans still face these same challenges today. This is why organizations like Veterans Guardian exist—to help Veterans receive the benefits they are entitled to while navigating a complex, inefficient, and often failing system.

## **II. Veterans Guardian's Mission and Impact in Minnesota**

At Veterans Guardian, our mission is to provide transparent, effective, and efficient assistance to Veterans seeking VA disability benefits. We employ a staff composed of over 75% Veterans, spouses of Veterans, and spouses of active-duty service members. We have been recognized multiple times by the U.S. Department of Labor, Better Business Bureau, and military advocacy organizations for our ethical business practices and commitment to serving Veterans.

In Minnesota, our work has already made a significant impact:

- **There are 285,734 Minnesotan Veterans with only 296 Accredited Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) meaning there is 1 VSO for every 350 Veterans (a significant caseload, making it difficult for VSOs to assist every Veteran in a timely manner).**
- **375 Minnesotan Veterans have been helped by Veterans Guardian to accrue \$3.3 million in additional annual VA disability benefits**

The demand for VA disability claim support far outweighs the capacity of existing resources, leaving many Veterans with few viable options. SF 1894 would further restrict these options, ultimately harming the very Veterans it intends to protect.

## **III. The Need for More Options, Not Fewer**

Despite the good work done by Veterans Service Officers (VSOs), lawyers, and other accredited representatives, the current system alone is not enough to meet the growing needs of Veterans.

- **The VA backlog for disability claims exceeds 240,000 pending cases nationwide.**
- **The average wait time for VA claims processing is 150 days—often much longer for appeals.**
- **70% of Veterans who use Veterans Guardian first tried using free services but found them insufficient to meet their needs.**

Veterans Guardian provides an alternative, offering a team-based, expert approach to claims preparation, evidence development, and regulatory

compliance. Veterans come to us by choice—not because they are unaware of free options, but because they have tried them and need additional support.

We fully inform our clients about all free services available, and every Veteran who works with us signs a “Your Claim, Your Choice” affidavit acknowledging their understanding.

#### **IV. The Impact of SF 1894**

SF 1894, if passed, would:

- 1. Limit Veterans’ right to choose how they pursue their benefits by prohibiting them from working with private claims consulting organizations.**
- 2. Increase the burden on already overstretched VSOs, worsening wait times and service quality.**
- 3. Ignore the needs of the thousands of Minnesotan Veterans who have already chosen to seek alternative, professional assistance.**
- 4. Force layoffs of Veteran employees at businesses like Veterans Guardian, who provide employment opportunities to those who have served.**

We support common-sense accreditation reform at the federal level, including increased knowledge requirements, reasonable fee caps, and enhanced oversight. However, outright banning claims consulting organizations—without offering an alternative path for accreditation—is harmful and shortsighted.

Instead of restricting options, Minnesota should support an improved system that allows competent, ethical private firms to become accredited and continue serving Veterans who need their expertise.

#### **V. Conclusion**

Veterans deserve more options, not fewer. They should not be forced into an overburdened system that lacks the capacity to effectively serve them. SF 1894 takes away a Veteran’s right to choose how they seek help, without offering a real solution to the challenges they face.

I urge this committee to oppose SF 1894 and instead support reforms that enhance oversight and accountability while preserving Veterans' ability to seek expert assistance on their terms. SF1894 simply deprives a Veteran of choice but doesn't fix or add to the already under-resourced VSO's capabilities.

We are working with Veteran Minnesotan legislators on a piece of legislation that offers consumer protections for Veterans without eliminating their options.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify and look forward to answering any questions.

If you need further information, I can be reached at:

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