



Nick Roth  
Committee Administrator

Dear Nick Roth,

Predatory Claim Shark companies are engaging in illegal activities and there is no gray area here, no matter how much money they want to throw at it.

For more than a century, your VFW has been on the forefront of advocating for veterans and their earned benefits. In the last year alone, more than 550,000 veterans received more than \$13 billion in benefits from VA through the diligence and professionalism of the VFW's global network of VA-accredited service officers. Not a penny of this \$13 billion went to line the pockets of the VFW. It all went to the veterans, as the law requires.

The VFW has been a vocal opponent of predatory "Claim Sharks" – companies who charge veterans illegal fees for sub-par VA benefit claims assistance. Make no mistake, the proliferation of these illicit organizations is a threat, not only to the VFW's cornerstone National Veterans Service (NVS) program, but an even greater threat to the VA benefits system as we know it.

Since their emergence, the VFW has ratcheted up the pressure on these companies by passing legislation to crack down on their practices at the state level and are working to help veterans bring litigation against them. We have trained our more than 2,300 VFW Accredited Service Officers on how to handle Claim Sharks, and we continue to seek out veterans who need help getting out of these predatory contracts.

Now these Claim Sharks are trying to normalize and legitimize their financial exploitation of our nation's disabled veterans – they even named VSOs like the VFW as their "threats." While we should be flattered that they recognize the threat we pose, now is the time to decisively defeat this scourge.

The Bottom line is: Predatory Claim Shark companies are engaging in illegal activities. There is no gray area here, no matter how much money they want to throw at it. Their latest collusion is a desperate attempt to avoid accountability.

Your VFW has aggressively pursued this issue in all corners of government, solidifying the veteran community's stance on this issue. We encourage you all to read up on the facts and familiarize yourself with this issue, and to help we have produced a VFW Claim Shark Fact Sheet for you to see what the National VFW is educating the public on.

## VFW DEPARTMENT OF MINNESOTA

The VFW has testified before Congress stating, "Any group that fails to adhere to VA's well-established standards of accreditation and fee arrangements should be greeted at the door by Capitol Police, not offered a seat at the same table as VA-accredited representatives who are held to certain professional and ethical standards."

Enclosed within this is a VFW template for any State willing to pursue these predatory players. It is fashioned after other State's who have already passed laws to discourage, prevent and prosecute anyone who is taking financial advantage of our Nation's Veterans who have earned their benefits, and can obtain pro bono assistance from any accredited service organizations who are highly trained in navigating the Department of Veterans Affairs laws, policies, and procedures.

We thank you for your time and consideration in this matter and hope that you can see fit to enact legislation to put an end to these Claim Sharks who take full advantage of those who put their lives on the line defending the freedoms of this country and its citizens.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Staehlin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David Staehlin  
State Commander  
Dept of MN, VFW