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Greetings Chair and Members,

I am Justin Kent, Goodhue County Veteran Service Officer. I'd like to start with the same foundation the VA begins our accreditation education with, as it is pertinent to the discussion we are having today. Accreditation began shortly after the Civil War. Lawyers were charging veterans exorbitant fees for filing claims to the predecessor of what is now the Veterans Benefits Administration. To solve this, Congress along with the VA predecessor created the accreditation system. Accreditation meant that these lawyers could still represent veterans, but for a reasonable fee.

An unaccredited claim shark does not have access to the Veteran Benefits Management System (VBMS). Even the veteran themselves do not have access to the VBMS system to the level of detail and accredited individual is. It is this level of access that allows us CVSO's to provide a quality service to our veterans that is unachievable by an unaccredited business. CVSO's can dig into the details of the VA's processes, look at a veteran's service treatment records, personnel files, VA medical records, and medical opinions to find any errors the VA made, and file a well articulated and detailed claim. A CVSO can even add notes to the veteran's files to show the VA employees where to find information pertinent to the veteran's claim. All a claims shark could do is take a best guess and file the claim.

Last year a veteran came to my office while a claim Trajector had filed for him was going through the VA system. Trajector had charged the veteran \$2000 for filing the claim. Tajector had listed twenty conditions in the claim without supporting evidence from the veteran's service treatment records or VA medical records. The VA then spent thousands of dollars on medical exams, and the veteran had to spend multiple days traveling to these exams. All with the result of a ten percent service connected rating.

When the veteran came to my office, as an accredited service officer, I was able to go over his service records and find that a ship he had been on had been in the territorial waters of Guam while agent orange was being used on the island. We were able to get him seventy percent service connected for a handful of Agent Orange related conditions, saving the veteran and the VA time and money.

On a separate occasion, I was working with an Air Force veteran who stated he was sent to Guam on temporary orders during a bombing campaign in Vietnam. The VA had denied his claim multiple times as no evidence had been found in his records of Guam service. After three reviews of his service records, we were



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able to finally find the one line in his medical records where a doctor had notated his records were received at the medical station in Guam. We were able to get him service connected for Agent Orange exposure after years of his claims being denied.

Accreditation ensures a veteran gets a level of quality service that is unattainable by unaccredited claims sharks. Accreditation also ensures that veterans who choose to go the route of paying for their services are charged reasonable fees for the services they receive. The bottom line is that claims sharks could become accredited, still charge for their services, and make a profit while providing an excellent quality of service. Instead, they choose to provide lower quality services for higher fees that see far less success.

Thank you for your time,

Justin Kent