



Director of Veterans Services

Greg Peterson

County Veteran Service Officer

John Schotzko

Asst. County Veteran Service Officer

Mike Montalto

3/31/2025

Senate Agriculture, Veterans, Broadband, and Rural Development Committee

Greetings Committee Chair Putnam and members,

My name is Greg Peterson, the Brown County Director of Veterans Services. I have been in this position for 21 years and have served as the CVSO Association President in 2019-2021. Today I come to speak in favor of SF1894 and keeping the requirement of "accreditation" for all who guide Veterans in Minnesota. The US Department of Veterans Affairs, already requires that anyone who assists a veteran in preparing and presenting benefits claims be accredited[1]. However, that law has no penalties, and claim sharks "feed" on the knowledge that there are no consequences to them operating outside the law. VA accreditation requires each applicant to be subject to an FBI background investigation to determine if the applicant has ever been convicted of a crime in military or a civilian court. Whether they have ever been expelled from a school, ever been disciplined or terminated from employment for dishonesty, fraud, or deceit. Checking for behavioral impairments such as alcohol or substance abuse; mental, nervousness, or emotional disorders. When approved, applicants must pass a rigorous test, maintain continuing education, and are listed on the VA's Accredited Attorney & Agents website; my accreditation number is: 13922.

Many occupations have a standards board that requires their own form of accreditation. Attorneys, Dentists, Doctors, Sheriffs, and even School Cooks require annual training and certifications. Think of it this way...say you need a tooth pulled in preparation for an implant. I can pull your tooth and do it at a greatly reduced rate than your dentist. Or, [and with all due respect] to the Senator, we could start Dahms Claims, and the Senator could strike it rich with the same modus operandi of Claims Sharks in Minnesota. While these examples seem silly and unadvisable, they are examples of the epitome of allowing a non-accredited person to provide VA claims assistance to Minnesota's veterans.

I am also a member of the National Association of Veterans Advocates (NOVA), a 600+ professional association of attorneys, claims representatives, and Veterans Service Organizations. NOVA is kicking off its annual training conference at the Hilton in downtown Minneapolis tonight. I've attached their three-day training agenda so you can immediately understand the breadth of information that their members will cover to maintain accreditation with the VA. Claim Sharks can't attend this training because they are not accredited, they are simply sketchy, shady and out to rob our veterans who know no different. Imposing an accreditation requirement will expose the fraudulent and regulate the honest advocates.

Thank you for hearing my concerns, I am willing to answer any questions.

[1] 38 USC 14.626

NOVA 2025 SPRING CONFERENCE

Thursday – April 3, 2025

Time	Description	Presenter
7:30 am	Continental Breakfast & Registration <i>Please make sure to sign in for CLEs at the registration desk each morning!</i>	
7:55 am	Welcoming Remarks	Zachary Stolz, NOVA Seminar Committee Co-Chair
8:00 am (60 min)	Outreach, Regulatory, Legislative Updates	Diane Boyd Rauber, Esq., NOVA
9:00 am (45 min)	Recent Court Cases and How to Use Them – Part I	Amy Kretkowski, Esq., <i>Law Office of Amy B. Kretkowski</i> , and Amy Odom, Esq., <i>Chisholm Chisholm & Kilpatrick</i>
9:45 am (15 min)	BREAK	
10:00 am (45 min)	Recent Court Cases and How to Use Them – Part II	
10:45 am (60 min)	Maximizing VA Electronic Access: ILER, CAPRI, VBMS & More	Kelsey Craveiro, Esq., and Simon Kelly, Esq., <i>Rob Levine and Associates</i>
11:45 am (90 min)	Lunch (on your own)	
1:15 pm (45 min)	Chief Judge Michael Allen	U.S. Court of Appeals for Veteran Claims
2:00 pm (30 min)	NOVA Awards Ceremony	Christine Clemens, Esq., NOVA President
2:30 pm (15 min)	BREAK	
2:45 pm (60 min)	Understanding and Arguing Fair Process	John Niles, Esq., <i>Carpenter Chartered</i>
3:45 pm (60 min)	ETHICS: Succession Planning: Ethical, Practical, and Financial Considerations	Jeffrey J. Bunten, Esq., <i>Jeffrey J. Bunten, Attorney at Law</i>
5:00 pm	RECEPTION - <i>Symphony Ballroom</i>	

NOVA 2025 SPRING CONFERENCE

Friday – April 4, 2025

Time	Description	Presenter
7:30 am	Continental Breakfast & Registration <i>Please make sure to sign in for CLEs at the registration desk each morning!</i>	
7:55 am (60 min)	How to Argue Benefit of the Doubt at the Agency and Request Specific Findings	Christine Clemens, Esq., <i>Chisholm Chisholm & Kilpatrick</i>
9:00 am (60 min)	Effective Strategies to Safeguard VA Benefits: Navigating Proposals for Reduction or Severance	Katrina Eagle, Esq., and Jim Radogna, <i>Law Office of Katrina J. Eagle</i>
10:00 am (15 min)	BREAK	
10:15 am (90 min)	Life in the Military and Its Impact on Health	Panel: Brett Buchanan, <i>Allsup</i> ; Keri Jackson, MD; Felicia Mullaney, Esq., <i>FourLeaf Veterans Law</i> ; Adam Zider, <i>Veterans Help Group</i> Moderator: Travis James West, Esq., <i>West and Dunn</i>
11:45 am (90 min)	Lunch (on your own)	
1:15 pm (45 min)	VA Guest Speaker	Jonathan Krisch, Esq., <i>OGC</i>
2:00 pm (75 min)	How to Use Military Manuals, Regulations, and Other Publications to Support Your Client's Case	Daniel Clarke, Esq., <i>Tucker Disability</i>
3:15 pm (15 min)	BREAK	
3:30 pm (60 min)	ETHICS: Fees: How Recent Changes in the Law Will Effect How You Are Paid	Adam Luck, Esq., <i>GloverLuck</i>
4:30 pm (30 min)	Q&A SESSION WITH SPEAKERS	

NOVA 2025 SPRING CONFERENCE

Saturday – April 5, 2025

WORKSHOP SESSIONS – attendees pick 4 of 5- please see your assignments in your badge holder

Time	Description
7:30 am	Continental Breakfast <i>Please make sure to sign in for CLEs at the registration desk each morning!</i>
8:00 – 9:30am	Session #1
9:40-11:10am	Session #2
11:10am-12:10pm	Lunch and Networking
12:15-1:45pm	Session #3
1:55-3:25pm	Session #4

Time	Description	Presenter
Room 1: Symphony 1	Effectively Engaging with LGBTQ+ Veterans	Rachel Branaman, Becca Stewart, and Priya Phillips Rashid, <i>Modern Military Association</i>
Room 2: Conrad D	How Many Ways to Rate a Knee??	Brent Filbert, Esq., Martha Bradley Kleinhesselink, Esq., Katie Becker, Esq., and Carter Templeton, Esq., <i>University of Missouri School of Law</i>
Room 3: Conrad C	Proving the Invisible: Winning VA Claims Without Service Treatment Records	Rebecca Bartlett, Esq., <i>Bartlett Legal Group</i> , and Rebecca Deming, Esq., <i>ProVet Legal</i>
Room 4: Conrad B	Picking the Brains of Experienced Practitioners	Kenneth Carpenter, Esq., <i>Carpenter Chartered</i> ; Robert Chisholm, Esq., <i>Chisholm Chisholm & Kilpatrick</i> ; Virginia Girard, Esq., <i>Girard and Centonzio Veterans Disability Lawyers</i> , and Glenda Herl, <i>Carpenter Chartered</i>
Room 5: Conrad A	Analyzing and Challenging VA Examinations	Monica Irelan Karas, Esq., and Jacob Mailander, Esq., <i>Tabak Law LLC</i>