

Kaine Cosponsors Bipartisan Bill To Protect Veterans' Access To Va Benefits

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tim Kaine, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), cosponsored the Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding (GUARD) VA Benefits Act, bipartisan legislation led by John Boozman (R-AR) and Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) to protect veterans from unaccredited individuals and businesses charging unauthorized fees to assist veterans filing for disability benefits through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Current law prohibits unaccredited claim representatives, or “claim sharks,” from charging a fee for assisting a veteran in the preparation, presentation, or prosecution of a VA benefit claim. However, criminal penalties were eliminated from the statute nearly 20 years ago, limiting the VA and other federal agencies’ abilities to enforce the law.

The GUARD VA Benefits Act would reinstate criminal penalties and fee caps for unaccredited claim representatives, preventing these organizations from charging thousands of dollars for their services and protecting veterans’ access to their benefits.

“Our veterans deserve the benefits they’re entitled to, and it’s horrible that some veterans are being charged enormous fees by unauthorized businesses for help with the paperwork needed to access those benefits,” said Kaine. “This bill would hold these unaccredited claim representatives accountable and make it easier for veterans to access their benefits.”

Kaine has long supported efforts to expand access to VA benefits. He helped pass the PACT Act to expand health care and benefits through the VA to toxic-exposed veterans, which President Biden signed into law last year. Kaine has also cosponsored legislation to support the families of disabled veterans by providing critical support and assistance in accessing local, state, and federal resources to the approximately 2.3 million children under the age of 18 living in a household with a disabled veteran.