



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 399		DATE: 3/11/2025	
COMMITTEE: General Laws			
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: ARNIE C. AC "HONEST-ABE" DIENOFF, STATE PUBLIC ADV		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:		SUBMIT DATE: 3/11/2025 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME			
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WITNESS NAME: TROY WILLIAMS		PHONE NUMBER: 573-536-2434	
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WITNESS NAME			
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WITNESS NAME: JOHN BLOMSTROM		PHONE NUMBER: 202-746-9932	
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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 399, a bill that would significantly impact how Veterans in Missouri 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. 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 Missouri 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.

At Veterans Guardian: - We do not solicit the Veteran, they come to us; 50% of our clients are referrals- We never promise or guarantee an increase, - We never gain access to the Veteran's VA E-Benefit log in or bank account log in information- We do not have overseas call or data centers, or other employees- We do not have doctors on our pay-roll performing medical examinations- We do not charge up-front or initial consultation fees- We inform every Veteran of their free options (in fact, 70% of our clients have tried the VSOs and choose to hire us)- We ensure every Veteran knows we are not accredited currently by the VA (we are working with Congress, HR 1822, to provide a pathway to accreditation for our company and our operations model – one currently does not exist- We inform every client of our fee structure, up front, in writing, with their signed consent, before we even begin the onboarding process- We are transparent, ethical, and our results speak for themselves.

In Missouri, our work has already made a significant impact: • There are 399,154 Missouri Veterans with only 119 Accredited Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) meaning there is 1 VSO for every 2,970 Veterans (a significant caseload, making it difficult for VSOs to assist every Veteran in a timely manner). • 1,100 Missouri Veterans helped by Veterans Guardian accrue \$10.9 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. HB 399 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 HB 399

HB 399, 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 South Dakota 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, Missouri should support an improved system that allows competent, ethical private firms to become accredited and continue serving Veterans who need their expertise.

Conclusion

Veterans deserve more options, not fewer. They should not be forced into an overburdened system that lacks the capacity to effectively serve them. HB 399 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 HB 399 and instead support reforms that enhance oversight and accountability while preserving Veterans’ ability to seek expert assistance on their terms.



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WITNESS NAME			
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WITNESS NAME: MERLE JONES		PHONE NUMBER:	
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WITNESS NAME			
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WITNESS NAME: DALE ROBERTS		PHONE NUMBER:	
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I'm an attorney who has provided free legal service to my fellow Veterans for many years. In fact, several years ago I started doing a clinic at the Truman VA Hospital where I provided free legal assistance to my fellow Veterans. I received modest financial support from a non-profit so that I could continue doing so. I have worked for the Board of Veterans' Appeals in Washington DC and have experience in how Veteran disability cases are decided. However, it appears this legislation would mean that if I helped a Veteran under the circumstances described above, I would be guilty of a criminal offense. I have written the sponsor and hope to meet with him regarding HB399. I know Rep Griffith and I'm sure that would be an unintended consequence.