Office of the Governor
JB Pritzker

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CHICAGO- Today, Governor JB Pritzker signed SB3479 into law, also known as the Veteran's Consumer Fraud Bill. The legislation broadens the definition of "veteran or military benefits services" to include any consultation services that would assist in obtaining, changing, or appealing benefits decisions. The bill also targets predatory "claim sharks," or non-VA accredited individuals or companies that charge for consultation and filing services. These services are offered for free through government and non-profits across Illinois.

"Our state's veterans and military members always deserve clarity and protection when navigating the social services process," **said Governor JB Pritzker.** "With these amendments to the Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Business Practices Act, we can ensure claim sharks are prevented from charging Illinoisans hefty fees for services that are offered for free statewide. I want to thank my partners in the General Assembly, especially this bill's chief sponsors: Senator Mike Porfirio and Representative Stephanie Kifowit, for their dedication to getting this bill passed."

The legislation makes three substantive changes to the Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Business Practices Act:

1. Adds language to the definition of "veteran or military benefits services" to include "consulting or coaching in the preparation, presentation, or prosecution of claims or other attempts to obtain benefits" as a service.
2. Adds disclosure language to ensure veterans and military members are better informed about the services offered to them. Additionally, all county veteran service officers must now be VA accredited.
3. Adds language to clarify that failure to provide a veteran's services disclosure orally and in writing at the outset of a business relationship is an unlawful practice. Under current law, all private businesses must inform potential clients that consultation services are provided for free by local, state and federal governments.

The new legislation goes into effect January 1, 2025.

"IDVA has heard unimaginable stories from veterans who have lost thousands of dollars of their earned benefits to services taking advantage of them, often at their

most vulnerable," **said IDVA Director Terry Prince.** "We are grateful to the bill's sponsors Senator Mike Porfirio & Representative Stephanie Kifowit, and Governor Pritzker for advocating for veterans by securing these important protections. We encourage veterans to contact IDVA Veterans Service Officers positioned around the state and equipped to help them navigate their benefits and services, free of charge."

"I want to thank Governor Pritzker for signing this important piece of legislation, and I applaud Attorney General Kwame Raoul and the outstanding team at the Military and Veterans Rights Bureau in the Office of the Attorney General for their help and support on this legislation and all they do every day to protect and serve veterans in the state of Illinois. It is our duty to protect and respect our nation's veterans, not make them a victim to predatory practices," **said State Senator Mike Porfirio (D-Lyons Township).** "The enactment of this law ensures those who offer veteran and military benefits are held to the highest standards, safeguarding our military heroes from exploitation. The benefits they earned through their service and sacrifice should go into the pockets of veterans themselves so they can pursue the American dream for which they fought and served."

"We are taking needed action against 'claim sharks' who scam my fellow Veterans and their families who are trying to access the benefits they are rightfully owed," **said Rep. Stephanie Kifowit (D-Oswego).** "It's unconscionable to me that anyone would want to target our heroes like this after the sacrifices they have made for our country. This is a necessary update to our law that will help ensure our Veterans receive the respect, benefits and protections they deserve."

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