

September #, 2022

The Honorable Denis McDonough
Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonough,

We write to you regarding increased incidents of attempts to defraud veterans of damages they are owed due to their exposure to toxic chemicals. As you know, the VA is experiencing an influx of disability claims after the passage of the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act. This bipartisan legislation became the most significant expansion of VA healthcare in more than 30 years.

Recently, we have received concerning reports that scammers are now targeting veterans to access their PACT Act-related claims or to submit claims on their behalf. While the VA is inundated with disability claims from these newly eligible veterans, the department cannot start processing these claims until January 2023. This waiting period has left some veterans ripe for deceptive and fraudulent practices. Among other tactics, scammers are making false promises about expediting disability claims which allows them to steal millions of dollars from our veterans every year. Unfortunately, scammers like this are nothing new and they have been attempting to take advantage of veterans for years.

In 2021, the Federal Trade Commission published data that showed more than 162,000 veterans and military retirees reported fraud, identity theft, or other scams – resulting in \$177 million in total fraud loss.¹ This is a staggering increase from the year prior and proves the need for a more vigorous approach considering the new PACT Act-related benefits. Veterans affected by toxic exposure and substances have waited decades for our nation to fulfil its moral obligation to them.

We respectfully ask that your agency use every available resource to ensure a smooth process for the millions of newly eligible veterans submitting disability claims. Any type of outreach initiatives, such as a public service campaign, that educate our veterans on how to protect themselves from scams, report suspicious activity, and properly submit a PACT ACT-related claim would be greatly appreciated. The federal government must work to serve and protect veterans that once did the same for us.

Sincerely,

Member of Congress
Warren Davidson

¹ FTC, Consumer Sentinel Data Book 2021, page 17, available at www.ftc.gov/system/files/ftc_gov/pdf/CSN%20Annual%20Data%20Book%202021%20Final%20PDF.pdf.