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MADIGAN TO VETERANS, SERVICE MEMBERS & FAMILIES: SPECIALIZED RESOURCES & SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR FINANCIAL, LEGAL ISSUES

Chicago — In recognition of Memorial Day, Attorney General Lisa Madigan today reminded Illinois veterans, service members and their families about the resources her office provides to ensure they receive the federal and state benefits they have earned for their service and to ensure that their legal rights are upheld.

Attorney General Madigan's Military and Veterans' Rights Bureau contends with a wide variety of financial and legal concerns affecting the military community, such as financial scams connected to Veterans' Affairs (VA) benefits assistance, education benefits and housing issues. The Bureau also provides case advocacy to help service members exercise their due process rights in filing claims for compensation or pension benefits through the VA.

"Under the law, veterans and military service members are entitled to certain benefits and legal protections in recognition of their commitment to our country," Madigan said. "It is critical that we work to ensure they are awarded the full benefits and protections that they have earned for their honorable service."

In addition, the Bureau publishes a series of comprehensive resources that detail veterans' benefits and legal protections for service members. As a member of the U.S. Department of Justice's Financial Fraud Task Force, Attorney General Madigan's office led the development of a [toolkit](#) to assist state attorneys general and federal law enforcement partners in identifying common financial and legal protection issues facing the military community. The [toolkit](#) was designed to advance collaboration between state and federal agencies that enforce violations of veterans' and service members' rights. The Bureau also publishes [specialized guides](#) specifically for Illinois veterans and service members, including its regularly updated *Benefits for Illinois Veterans and Legal Rights of Illinois Service Members*.

As part of its effort to provide direct assistance to constituents, the Bureau also staffs the **Military and Veterans' Rights Hotline** (1-800-382-3000), which last year provided assistance to over 500 veterans, service members and their families, helping to obtain benefits and resolve financial and legal disputes. Direct assistance provided included:

- Mediating landlord-tenant disputes for service members facing Permanent Change of Station orders that conflict with lease agreements;
- Negotiating with VA medical centers to expand care for patients;
- Assisting seniors with temporarily suspended VA pension payments due to bureaucratic oversight;
- Obtaining assistance to secure short- and long-term care for disabled or terminally ill veterans;
- Helping secure housing for veterans;
- Providing guidance for service members seeking to appeal adverse insurance benefits decisions;
- Mediating financial transaction disputes, such as helping to remove fraudulent credit report entries or cancel erroneous debts;
- Obtaining compensation owed to veterans or for service members on military leave from their primary employer for annual guard training; and
- Securing refunds over disputed charges and fees.

As part of Madigan's Consumer Protection Division, the Military and Veterans' Rights Bureau also works with the Division's attorneys to pursue enforcement actions involving cases of fraud that target members of the armed services. For example, Madigan announced a joint settlement in 2012 with a California-based company to shut down its website, www.GIBill.com, for deceptively steering service members and veterans to use their federal education benefits with the company's preferred clients in the for-profit schools industry. On the federal level, Madigan called on Congressional leaders in 2012 to close a loophole in the Higher Education

Act that has allowed many for-profit schools to exploit education benefits available to American service members, veterans and their families. In 2013, Madigan [urged U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel to strengthen regulations](#) under the federal Military Lending Act (MLA) to ensure service members are better protected from abusive lending practices.

For more information about Madigan's Military and Veterans' Rights Bureau, please visit: <http://illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/rights/veterans.html>.

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