



October 19, 2017

ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN SUES VETERANS' ASSOCIATION FOR LURING VETS AND THEIR FAMILIES INTO PENSION BENEFITS SCAM

Madigan Alleges Association Misrepresented Financial Eligibility Requirements for VA Pension Program and Benefits

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan filed a lawsuit against the Association for Wartime Veterans (AAWV) and Atlantis Marketing Solutions Inc., (AMS), as well as AAWV's owner and president and the company's regional director for steering veterans and their families into costly insurance products they did not need.

Pension benefits scams prey on veterans by targeting the financial assistance offered through the U.S. Department of Veterans (VA), which provides pension benefits to financially disadvantaged wartime veterans over age 65 and their survivors.

Madigan's lawsuit, filed in the Circuit Court of Cook County, alleges that since 2009 AAWV and AMS, both located in Shelby Township, Michigan, sent "professional members" across Illinois to make pitches to veterans and widows at assisted living facilities about applying to the VA for various pension program benefits. In addition to not being accredited by the VA as required by federal law, the so-called professional members were actually salespeople peddling annuities and other insurance products. Madigan alleges AAWV's actual purpose was to generate leads to funnel to AMS or related organizations in order to sell annuities.

"Unfortunately, too many veterans and their widows are the targets of scammers who make false promises but big profits promising to provide financial security to veterans' families," Madigan said. "I will continue to stop these despicable scammers from taking advantage of people who have sacrificed to serve our country."

Madigan's complaint alleges that AAWV and AMS have violated the Illinois Consumer Fraud Act by:

- Misrepresenting that AAWV is a community outreach service formed to provide information to wartime veterans and their surviving spouses, when in fact AAWV was formed primarily to generate leads for the sale of insurance and related financial products by its members who are insurance agents affiliated with AMS.
- Failing to disclose that AAWV's presenters are insurance agents who have paid a fee to AAWV for the opportunity to conduct the presentation in the name of the organization and for the purpose of generating leads for subsequent sales of insurance products.
- Distributing advertisements for "free seminars" without disclosing in the advertisement that the seminar is also an "insurance sales presentation," as required by the Illinois Department of Insurance regulations.
- Misrepresenting that the VA pension process is difficult for claimants to navigate without help, and misrepresenting the purported lack of free, accredited resources available to help applicants through the VA pension process, when in fact, there are VA-accredited professionals who are trained and qualified to file claims on behalf of veterans at no charge.
- Falsely claiming that AAWV can expedite the VA pension process.
- Stating that claimants who use AAWV's services have a higher rate of success of obtaining a VA pension than those who do not use the organization's services.
- Presenting representatives as experts in the VA pension process but then failing to file the required form to ensure that claimants have the opportunity to receive retroactive pension payments.
- Misrepresenting that AAWV and its professional members are VA accredited to assist in the preparation of a claim for the VA pension, when in fact they are not.
- Providing inaccurate and incomplete information about the financial eligibility rules for the VA pension program.
- Misrepresenting that some consumers must purchase annuities to qualify or maintain their financial eligibility for the VA pension program when such a purchase is not required.

Madigan encourages Illinois veterans and their families to be mindful of the following warning signs of a scam:

- Only a VA-accredited representative can assist you in filing a VA claim.
- Be aware if someone tells you that you need to transfer your assets to qualify for VA pension benefits, especially if that person will receive a commission for that transfer. Transferring assets may have significant tax and legal consequences, and in many cases is not needed to qualify for VA pension benefits.
- If you receive VA pension benefits based on false financial need, you could be required to repay any benefits received.
- For more information, see Attorney General Madigan's [brochure on VA pension scams](#).

AAWV and AMS have attracted the attention of other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, including the VA, Minnesota's Commissioner of Commerce, and Hillsborough County, Florida. Generally, such conduct has also received scrutiny from the U.S. Senate Committee on Aging and the Government Accountability Office.

Madigan's lawsuit seeks to ban AAWV from using deceptive or unfair tactics to advertise, market and sell its products to Illinois consumers. It also seeks to rescind all contracts between AAWV and Illinois consumers, asks for full restitution to all impacted consumers and seeks a civil penalty of \$50,000. If the court finds AAWV and AMS acted with the intent to defraud, it can require the companies to pay a civil penalty of \$50,000 per violation, as well as an additional civil penalty of \$10,000 for each violation against a person 65 years of age or older.

For more information about the pension benefits scam or to learn more about Madigan's Military and Veterans' Rights Bureau, please visit her [website](#) or contact her **Military and Veterans' Rights Hotline** at 1-800-382-3000.

Veterans can also gather more information from the following resources:

- A searchable list of VA-accredited representatives is available at www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation/index.asp or call 1-800-827-1000.
- For more information about VA non-service-connected pension benefits, visit www.benefits.va.gov/pension.

Chicago Bureau Chief Grant Swinger and Assistant Attorney General Andrew Dougherty are handling the case for Madigan's Military & Veterans' Rights Bureau.

-30-

[Return to October 2017 Press Releases](#)

