

ACTING ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY GENERAL STUART F. DELERY ANNOUNCES THE SERVICEMEMBERS AND VETERANS INITIATIVE

March 19, 2015

Courtesy of Acting Associate Attorney General Stuart F. Delery

Acting Associate Attorney General Stuart F. Delery announced the creation of the Department of Justice's Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative in a video. You can watch the video [here](#).

Acknowledging the Debt We Owe Servicemembers and Veterans Through a New Initiative

Attorney General Holder has said that, although we can never hope to repay the debt of gratitude our nation owes the heroes who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, we must never forget to acknowledge what we owe. The Department of Justice is firmly committed to doing its part in acknowledging what we owe. That's why I am proud to announce the Attorney General's creation of the **Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative**. This initiative will be led by three dedicated career Justice Department attorneys with strong ties to the military community. They will further the Department's existing efforts by coordinating and expanding our enforcement, outreach, and training efforts on behalf of servicemembers, veterans, and their families. The initiative will address the unique challenges that servicemembers face while on active duty, that veterans face upon returning home, and that families face when a loved one is deployed.

The sacrifices of our nation's servicemembers go beyond the courageous act of putting themselves in harm's way to defend our way of life. The sad fact is, they also face obstacles to exercising their civil rights and maintaining their families' financial security. That is why the Justice Department prioritizes enforcing the statutes specifically created to protect the civilian employment rights, voting rights, and financial security of those serving in the Armed Forces.

The Department is already having success on this front and we intend to have more. We have developed resources to help prosecutors respond to illegal foreclosures of servicemembers' homes while they are on active duty and to scams that threaten servicemembers' savings as they try to get their financial affairs in order in preparation for a deployment. In the past few months, the Department has recovered over \$123 million for servicemembers who were the victims of [illegal non-judicial foreclosures](#); secured almost \$10 million of relief in a lawsuit against a company that [illegally repossessed over 1,100 cars](#); and obtained relief for 138 National Guard dual-status technicians who were [illegally required to leave their civilian positions](#) prior to entering active duty service. In addition, the Department awards grants to support mentoring programs and services for youth with a parent in the military.

The unique challenges often do not stop when a person leaves the Armed Forces. For example, some of our Nation's more than 22 million veterans suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse,

or other mental health problems connected to their experiences while serving. That is why the Department supports Veterans' Treatment Courts, which promote sobriety, recovery, and stability for veterans struggling with addiction or mental illness who have become involved in the criminal justice system.

The Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative will reinforce the importance of this critical work and also make it easier for the Department to use all available resources and legal authorities to protect the rights and interests of the brave men and women who serve or have served in our Armed Forces. The Initiative's initial focus will be on three areas: enforcement, education, and access to justice.

- **Enforcement:** We will extend the expertise and resources needed to enforce the civil and criminal statutes protecting the rights of servicemembers, veterans, and their families to lawyers and investigators throughout the Department, allowing us to expand and coordinate our enforcement efforts. We will also promote information sharing among federal, state, and local enforcement agencies, so that they too can use all of the tools at their disposal.
- **Education:** We will make sure that servicemembers, veterans, and their families have access to information about their rights and who to contact to report abuse. We will achieve this by working with people who serve as the first points of contact for members of the military community at the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs, and the Judge Advocate General offices at military installations throughout the world; by maintaining an accessible website with vital information to direct servicemembers and veterans to the resources they need; and by reaching out to underserved populations with high representation in the military, such as American Indians and Alaska Natives.
- **Access to Justice:** We will use grants and other resources to support the efforts of courts, law enforcement, and other organizations to respond appropriately to the specialized circumstances of servicemembers and veterans in the criminal and civil justice systems. And we will build on existing partnerships with public and private programs that benefit and protect servicemembers, veterans, and their families, including organizations that provide not-for-profit legal services.

If we do our jobs well, we will allow servicemembers to focus on their work protecting the country and help veterans take their rightful place in the country they have sacrificed so much to protect and defend.

It is my hope that this Initiative will be a mainstay of the Department's work for many years to come. And I encourage anyone interested in the Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative to get in touch with its new leaders: Director Silas Darden (Major in the Air Force Reserve) and Assistant Directors Andrew Braniff (Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act Program Coordinator for the Department's Civil Rights Division) and Spencer Fisher (Chief Warrant Officer 2 in the Marine Corps Reserve), servicemembers@usdoj.gov