

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2010

Veteran Benefits scam- note that the hook is aid/attendance benefits

## Montana officials warn of scams targeting veterans

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Several Montana officials gathered in Great Falls on Thursday to warn of scams that target veterans. They also announced the creation of an inter-agency working group to focus on preventing the financial exploitation of aging and disabled veterans.

Commissioner of Securities and Insurance Monica Lindeen, Attorney General Steve Bullock, and Veterans Affairs Division Director Joe Foster met with area veterans and their families at VFW Post 1087 to discuss the reported schemes.

According to veterans' advocates, the danger comes from unqualified individuals who set themselves up as financial advisors, claiming expertise in maximizing veterans benefits. While they sell themselves as experts, the advice they give to elderly or disabled veterans living in retirement communities and nursing homes across the state may actually put the veterans' financial future at risk.

Investigators with the Attorney General's Office of Consumer Protection and the Commissioner of Securities and Insurance Office are looking into allegations that this may be occurring in Montana.

Lindeen noted, "Criminals have no qualms about fabricating an affiliation with the military to gain trust. Salespeople have been known to peddle phony insurance and investment products, preying on military families' fears and then disappearing with the money."

As Attorney General, Bullock oversees the Montana Department of Justice's Office of Consumer Protection; he said, "Our nation's aging veterans deserve to be protected, so today we are sending would-be scammers a message: 'We're watching and will take action against you,'"

The goal of the working group is to increase awareness of possible scams that target elderly or disabled veterans in nursing homes and assisted living centers.

According to Veterans Affairs Division Director Joe Foster, his agency has a staff of 21 assigned across the state to assist veterans in attaining their legitimate VA benefits and to serve as the veterans' advocate.

"These schemes, which aim to transfer elderly veterans' financial assets, are happening throughout the state," Foster said. "They are misleading, potentially fraudulent and financially devastating, and use VA pension and aid/attendance benefits as the 'hook.'"

Visit the [Office of Consumer Protection website](#) for more information and resources.