



National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission

1608 K Street, N.W. • Washington, D.C. 20006

K. Robert Lewis, Chairman - Connecticut

Peter S. Gaytan, Director - Maryland

17-08

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Veterans' Benefits Seminars

In July 2007, we issued VA&R Bulletin 22-07 clarifying The American Legion's policy on attorney referrals in the event such a referral is requested by a veteran or an attorney. That bulletin provided policy that must be adhered to by accredited American Legion representatives. Accredited representatives are individuals officially recognized by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to represent veterans and other claimants, seeking VA benefits, on behalf of The American Legion. As stated in this previous bulletin, American Legion policy does not permit accredited American Legion representatives to refer any claimant seeking VA benefits to an attorney, nor are accredited American Legion representatives permitted to make a specific referral to an attorney at any time.

As a point of clarification, accredited representatives of The American Legion receive their accreditation through the national organization and are, therefore, bound by our attorney referral policy. Although the national organization does not have direct authority to prevent Legionnaires and other individuals that are not accredited American Legion representatives from making attorney referrals, it should be understood that making such referrals is in violation of the rules of the national organization.

In the past few months American Legion posts and departments have been contacted by various attorneys, law firms and other groups requesting the use of meeting space and other forms of support for their efforts to conduct veterans' benefits seminars or workshops to educate veterans and their dependents about, and provide assistance with, obtaining VA benefits. Some of these individuals and groups are providing these services free of charge while others are charging fees. Some are providing basic information and assistance free of charge but charging for more in-depth service such as actual representation before VA in an appeal.

It is in direct conflict with The American Legion's policy regarding attorney referrals for an American Legion post or an American Legion department to sponsor or participate in such events because such involvement amounts to a referral. Moreover, an American Legion post or department hosting such an event could be interpreted as endorsement of or an affiliation with these individuals or groups, which is against American Legion policy. Therefore, American Legion departments and posts **should not** host these events or otherwise do anything to imply endorsement of such individuals or groups.

The American Legion has provided free service and assistance to our nation's veterans, regardless of membership, since 1919. We will continue to provide this service. Questions or issues involving VA-related matters that cannot be properly addressed by the post service officer should be referred to the professional Department Service Officer (DSO) or National VA&R Division staff. American Legion posts that would like to host a veterans' benefits seminar or information workshop are encouraged to request the support of their department or state service officers for such events.

Please contact Steve Smithson, Deputy Director for Claims Service, VA&R, at ssmithson@legion.org or (202) 263-2985 if you have any questions or concerns.



PETER S. GAYTAN, Director
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