



VETERANS GUARDIAN
VA CLAIM CONSULTING

Statement of Lt. Col. William “Bill” Taylor (Ret., US Army)

Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer

Veterans Guardian VA Claim Consulting, LLC

Before the

Kansas State House Veterans and Military Committee

Oral Testimony in Opposition of 2025 KS HB 2213

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I. Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony expressing Veterans Guardian’s views on several important pieces of legislation, specially KS HB 2213 which we have strong concerns with and oppose this bill.

My name is William Taylor and I am a co-founder of Veterans Guardian VA Claim Consulting, and a Veteran of the US Army. I am a proud graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point and retired in 2018 as a Lieutenant Colonel after a 23-year career that included six deployments to Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Balkans, and positions from the platoon to 4-star level staff positions. I am proud to have founded one of the largest Veteran owned and operated companies assisting my fellow Veterans with their disability claims.

In 2015, as I was considering retiring from the Army, one of the questions that came up was VA disability benefits. I knew little more than that they existed and, like so many in the military, I had heard horror stories about how cumbersome and complicated the process was, but I felt healthy and assumed I probably did not qualify, which I now know was wrong. Information about claiming VA disability benefits was practically non-existent and difficult to find. Worse still, getting an appointment with a claims representative was even more difficult due to limited operating hours and limited capacity for the large military population in and around Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Despite being a senior officer, and having knowledgeable friends and colleagues, it took a significant amount of their support, advice, and my own research for me to successfully navigate the system and submit my own claim.

Unfortunately, I am the exception and not the norm. That is why we founded Veterans Guardian. If I, as a senior officer, had this much trouble navigating the system, something surely was not right. Unfortunately, the VA disability process is a bureaucratic and difficult system to navigate that presents challenges to most Veterans, often resulting in deserving Veterans not receiving the benefits to which they are entitled. I am proud of the work my company has done to assist Veterans with this process.

Veterans Guardian employs a staff of more than 75% Veterans, spouses of Veterans, spouses of active-duty service members or immediate family members of veterans. We have been recognized by the Department of Labor by receiving the HIRE Vets platinum or gold award four years in a row. We have received the BBB Torch Award for Marketplace Ethics in 2020, 2021, and 2022. We were most recently recognized for hiring veterans and spouses and named a Military Friendly Company of the year. We are the national presenting sponsor for Irreverent Warriors and support more than

60 national and local charities, including support to local chapters of many of the organizations that have also been invited to engage in this important discussion today.

II. Opposition to KS HB 2213

I am writing today respectfully in opposition to Kansas House Bill 2213.

Attempting to protect Veterans is an honorable endeavor that we all share; unfortunately, HB 2213 misses the mark and would not only deny a Veteran the right to choose how they pursue their own claim, but they also fail to address the full spectrum of the issues at hand. The bills as sold also fail to address critical issues including: providing additional oversight and protections for the Veteran while preserving their Constitutional rights to petition their government in a manner they see fit, and ensuring Veterans have access to diverse options and effective solutions for decades to come.

Additionally, nearly identical legislation is currently being challenged in other states on First Amendment grounds, including Veterans' right to petition their government – a right they were willing to give their lives for.

Trapping Veterans in a backlogged appeals system only benefiting a handful of attorneys is something Veterans Guardian aims to avoid by focusing on getting claims done correctly the first time. The current US Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) disability benefits system is at best cumbersome and adversarial, and at worse broken to a point where it harms the Veterans for the benefit of a small number of powerful boutique law firms. In fact, in recent US Congressional testimony, Kenneth Arnold, Acting Chairman of the Board of Veterans' Appeals testified under oath:

"The [VA] courts clerk annually approved 6,500 to 7,300 attorney fee requests each year, almost all for remanded cases. This generates \$45 to \$50 million in attorney's fees each year, with the majority going to a small number of boutique law firms with relatively few Veterans receiving any increase in their monthly compensation."

If passed, HB 2213 will only exacerbate the problems with the current system and will add to the ever-growing backlog of claims processed through VSOs and perversely incentivized attorneys. HB 2213 would rob Veterans of the opportunity to seek expert help with a wide variety of claims and would force them into the Veterans Administration appeals trap.

There is momentum building at the federal level in the United States Congress to reform the accreditation process for third party actors, like Veterans Guardian, that help Veterans achieve the full disability benefits they have earned. There are more than 18 million Veterans in America, but only 5 million have a disability rating. While actors such as VSOs and law firms also serve Veterans, more options, not less, are needed to effectively meet the demand of American Veterans.

Rather than purposely restrict a Veteran's right to choose how they pursue their claim as HB 2213 does, a better approach is to pass HB 2214, which will implement necessary reforms that must take place to ensure the integrity of the systems and to protect Veterans from potentially bad actors.

These are true protections that will ensure the Veteran is not taken advantage of, while still preserving their rights to seek expert claims support.

III. Conclusion

The demand for current services in this space is far too vast for the government and VSOs to handle on their own. This highlights the need for an enhanced system that provides an expanded pathway for accreditation and enhanced oversight.

HB 2213 does the exact opposite, and we encourage you to oppose this legislation as it denies Veteran's choice and keeps them trapped in the current broken system.

Instead, we encourage you to support and pass HB 2214 which enacts common sense reforms to protect Veterans in Kansas.

Thank you for allowing me to present to you, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.