

A SUPPORTIVE EMPLOYER

I recently visited Camp Murray, Washington's National Guard headquarters, to sign a Statement of Support as an employer for members of the Guard and Reserve. The Office of Attorney General employs about 1,100 people and has multiple locations across the state. By signing the Statement of Support I committed to:

- Fully recognizing, honoring, and enforcing the federal Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act;
- Making sure managers and supervisors have the tools they need to effectively manage Guard and Reserve employees;
- Appreciating the value and skills of servicemembers, and encouraging employment opportunities for them; and
- Recognizing and supporting our country's servicemembers and their families.

The Washington Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), a Department of Defense committee, works to improve understanding and appreciation of the laws establishing employment protections for members of the National Guard and Reserve.



Attorney General Ferguson signing the employer "Statement of Support" in front of Washington Adjutant General Brett Daugherty and ESGR State Chair Bob DeWald.



Attorney General Ferguson speaking at a Memorial Day service at Wenatchee City Cemetery.

COMMEMORATING MEMORIAL DAY

On Memorial Day, I was proud to join the community and city leaders of Wenatchee in commemorating the holiday - a holiday reserved to honor the men and women who died while in military service and to reflect on their sacrifice.

I joined the Mayors of East Wenatchee and Wenatchee on a pedestrian bridge over the Columbia River to toss a wreath into the river in honor of those lost at sea. I later spoke at the Memorial Day service at the Wenatchee City Cemetery.

In my comments, I stressed the importance of honoring the sacrifice of those who gave their lives for our country - a duty we fulfill by giving our support to the men and women who put their lives on the line and to the families who are left behind.

WASHINGTON STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE

VETERAN & MILITARY UPDATE

FALL 2013



A NEW FOCUS ON VETERANS & MILITARY SERVICEMEMBERS

As Attorney General, it is an honor to be able to serve Washington's veterans, military personnel, and their families. Like many Washingtonians, I come from a family of veterans.

My late father was proud of his Navy service, both of my grandfathers served in the military, and many of my uncles fought in WWII.

Serving our veterans and military servicemembers is one of my top priorities as Attorney General. Making sure our veterans and military servicemembers receive the assistance they deserve is important. These proud men and women have done their part to honor and serve our country—and it is only right to honor and serve them in return.

As the enforcer of the state's consumer protection laws, the Attorney General's Office helps guard veterans and military personnel from deceptive and unfair business practices. I am excited to share news about the progress we are making on our new effort focusing on veterans and military personnel.

This update is the first of regular newsletters about the efforts of the Attorney General's Office to stand up for our military servicemembers, veterans, and their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bob".

Bob Ferguson
Washington Attorney General

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the Attorney General

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ATTORNEY GENERAL LAUNCHES A NEW **MILITARY & VETERANS INITIATIVE TO STAND UP FOR THOSE WHO SERVE**

Attorney General Ferguson's father, Murray Ferguson (left), served in the Navy.

NEW VETERANS & MILITARY RESOURCES

Thanks to their service, veterans and military personnel have certain rights and protections under state and federal laws. For example, there are laws to help avoid credit and foreclosure problems and laws to protect against discrimination in employment and housing. Veterans and servicemembers may also be entitled to healthcare, education, and other benefits.

To help educate veterans and military servicemembers about their legal rights, the Attorney General's Office recently released a new web-based resource available to the public. Working in consultation with the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs, the Attorney General's new website includes information about:

- Consumer protections;
- Employment protections;
- Housing protections; and
- Legal Assistance.

For more information, visit the new website at www.atg.wa.gov/VeteranMilitaryResources.

MILITARY & VETERANS ASSISTANCE TEAM

Focusing specifically on veterans and military servicemembers is a new emphasis for the Attorney General's Office. To guide this new effort, and to reflect this new priority across the agency, I created a new team of attorneys and staff from various divisions and locations of the office.

The goals of the new Military & Veterans Assistance Team will be to:

- **ENGAGE** the veteran and military communities to raise awareness and increase understanding about the issues they face;
- **EDUCATE** veterans and military personnel about the federal and state legal rights and protections available;
- **ENFORCE** the legal protections within the Attorney General's authority; and
- **ENCOURAGE** the development of policies that strengthen the support available to veterans, military servicemembers, and their families.

The Military & Veterans Assistance Team includes employees with military experience. I am grateful for their service and the important perspective they will provide.



PROTECTING VETERANS FROM CONSUMER SCAMS

The Attorney General's Office recently brought action to stop illegal practices by four unauthorized financial planning companies that were targeting senior veterans.

The unauthorized companies were marketing a variety of estate planning and financial services under the guise of "helping" the veteran or the spouse of a veteran qualify for a federal Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefit called "Aid and Attendance."

However, some of the veterans who worked with these financial planning companies said they were not fully informed of the risks involved in moving assets to try to qualify for the Aid and Attendance benefit, which could include losing Medicaid eligibility.

Under the consumer protection action we brought, the Attorney General's Office garnered restitution for victims, a total of \$81,000 in suspended civil penalties, \$19,500 in attorneys' fees, and a court order prohibiting the companies from targeting veterans in the future.

The Federal Trade Commission recently issued a warning about these dishonest "pension poachers." More information is online at www.consumer.ftc.gov.

To avoid potential scams, veterans and family members should remember it is free to apply for veterans' benefits. Individuals accredited through the federal VA are not allowed to charge veterans to help them complete and submit VA paperwork.

CONTACTING THE OFFICE

To help coordinate our new initiative, I have appointed a new Veterans Outreach Specialist, Travis Alley. If you have any questions, you can reach Travis at (206) 464-6431 or travisa@atg.wa.gov.



Contact the Attorney General's Consumer Resource Center

1-800-551-4636

To learn about your rights or for assistance resolving a consumer problem, please contact the Attorney General's Office.



Visit our website for more information

www.atg.wa.gov/VeteranMilitaryResources.aspx

