

AARP Wisconsin: AARP poll finds veterans unaware of new health benefits, leaving Wisconsin's heroes susceptible to fraud

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Active-duty military & veterans lost more than \$414 million to fraud and scams in 2022 - a 195% increase from 2021, FTC says

MADISON, WI - Wisconsin's U.S. veterans and active-duty service members face the threat of falling victim to scammers seeking to exploit them. Nearly two-thirds of veterans are unaware that they can receive free assistance with Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act (or PACT Act) benefits through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), according to a [new AARP survey](#).

The new law expands access to VA health care benefits for more than five million veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances. Survivors of deceased veterans are also eligible to receive these benefits.

One in 10 veterans approached by someone offering to assist with enrollment in these benefits say the offer guaranteed a lucrative payout, which is a telltale sign of a scam.

"Scammers targeting veterans is heinous," said AARP Wisconsin State Director Martha Cranley. "AARP Wisconsin continues to fight for those who proudly served our country by alerting them and their families of the latest scams, how to avoid

them, and ways to fight back.”

Veterans, service members and their families are targets of scammers due to a presumption of steady income and benefits, frequent moves and deployments, and tight-knit culture that criminals can exploit to gain unwarranted trust.

According to a 2021 [AARP survey](#), veteran/military adults are 40% more likely to lose money to scams and fraud than the civilian population. These individuals reported losing more than \$414 million in 2022, up from \$140 million in 2021 (a 195% increase), according to the [Federal Trade Commission](#).

“Our nation’s veterans should not have to worry about being exploited by financial predators,” said Troy Broussard, Senior Advisor of AARP Veterans and Military Families Initiative and U.S. Army Desert Storm veteran. “Scammers have a playbook to get us into a heightened emotional state that gets in the way of our ability to think logically. Knowing about these specific scams makes it far less likely that anyone will engage with them.”

[AARP’s Fraud Watch Network](#) offers some tips for how to avoid these scams:

- Veterans never have to pay for their earned benefits or service records – if told otherwise, it’s a scam.
- Veterans who receive a call or see an advertisement from an alleged law firm offering assistance with benefits claims should NOT assume that it is a trustworthy organization.
- Veterans and their families should sign up for the *National Do Not Call Registry* and use a call-blocking service.
- Veterans should never sign a blank form or agreement with an attorney or company without fully understanding what it is.

To learn about the latest scams and how to avoid them visit the AARP Veterans Fraud Center, at aarp.org/vetsfraudcenter. To learn how to apply for PACT Act benefits, visit aarp.org/vetshealthnavigator. For these resources and more information on AARP’s support for veterans and military families, visit aarp.org/veterans.

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