



Office of the Attorney General
Washington, D. C. 20530

November 10, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR HEADS OF DEPARTMENT COMPONENTS
UNITED STATES ATTORNEYS

FROM: **THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**

SUBJECT: **GUARDING THE RIGHTS OF AND IMPROVING ACCESS TO
JUSTICE FOR VETERANS, SERVICEMEMBERS, AND
MILITARY FAMILIES**

Tomorrow, the Justice Department will join Americans across the country in observing Veterans Day. It is a day to honor and express our gratitude to the nearly 20 million veterans of the United States Armed Forces among us. The more than 33,000 veterans who continue to serve our country as Justice Department employees embody the ideals of our Department and our nation every day. The Justice Department is committed to guarding the rights of and ensuring access to justice for veterans, servicemembers, and military families.

We honor our nation's veterans, servicemembers, and their families not just with words but also with action. To this end, I am directing the steps outlined below.

First, the Justice Department's Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative, announced in 2015, conducts outreach, shares information, identifies needs, collaborates with federal partners, and coordinates the distribution of Department resources to assist veterans, servicemembers, and their families. This work enhances and builds upon the Department's ongoing enforcement efforts to protect the rights of veterans and servicemembers, including their employment rights, financial rights, housing rights, voting rights, and more. In January 2021, the Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative Act codified the Initiative into federal law and expanded its duties.

The Initiative will provide the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights with a plan describing how the Initiative will carry out its duties as well as steps it will take to increase targeted outreach to veterans and servicemembers regarding their protections under federal civil rights statutes.

The Director of the Initiative will convene a Coordinating Committee to facilitate the sharing of information and resources to support the enforcement of federal laws against entities that violate the rights of veterans, servicemembers, and their families. The Committee will consist of representatives from relevant Department components, including but not limited to, the Civil Rights Division, the Civil Division's Consumer Protection Branch, the Executive Office for United States Attorneys, the Office of Justice Programs, and the Office for Access to Justice. The Committee will meet not less than quarterly.

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for Veterans, Servicemembers, and Military Families

Alongside strengthening our enforcement efforts, the Justice Department is committed to ensuring equal access to justice for veterans, servicemembers, and their families.

Veterans share many of the legal challenges faced by our civilian population, including eviction, unemployment, fraud, and family law disputes. They may also face unique challenges related to the nature of their discharge as well as challenges to their mental health and physical wellbeing stemming from their service. Leaving these legal needs unaddressed exacerbates the risks veterans already face – from housing instability to homelessness and from joblessness to suicide.

To help veterans, servicemembers, and their families address these unique challenges, the Office for Access to Justice will consult with the Initiative and all relevant Justice Department components to identify effective ways to promote access to justice in the civil and criminal legal systems, including through medical-legal partnerships, legal assistance clinics, veterans treatment courts, and reentry programs and services.

The Office for Access to Justice will also mobilize the expertise and resources of the more than two dozen federal departments and agencies that comprise the Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable, including the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense, to identify opportunities for interagency action. As soon as practicable, the Office for Access to Justice will provide recommendations to the Attorney General on actions that may be taken to address the justice gap and better meet the legal needs of veterans and servicemembers. Recommendations may build upon efforts to utilize new grant authorities that provide legal services for veterans and expand community service delivery mechanisms, including through medical-legal partnerships and veterans treatment courts.

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The Justice Department is committed to safeguarding the rights of and ensuring access to justice for veterans, servicemembers, and their families today, and in the days ahead.