



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
**SERVICEMEMBERS &
VETERANS INITIATIVE**



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OUR MISSION

The mission of the Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative is to strengthen and enhance the Department of Justice's efforts on behalf of servicemembers, veterans and their families by coordinating and expanding our enforcement, outreach and training.

The Initiative is connecting a comprehensive legal support and protection network focused on sharing information, identifying existing needs and trends, securing and directing the distribution of funding and other resources, and partnering with other federal agencies and state and local governments on their programs and initiatives designed to protect servicemembers' and veterans' rights.

WHAT WE DO

UPHOLDING THE LAW

- The Department of Justice enforces laws that protect the rights of servicemembers, veterans and their families.
 - The Department protects a servicemember's civilian employment rights by enforcing the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA).
 - The Department safeguards servicemembers' voting rights by enforcing the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA).
 - The Department promotes financial security for servicemembers, recent veterans and military family members through actions brought under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA).
- The Department identifies current legal issues affecting servicemembers and veterans through coordination with Judge Advocate Generals' Corps, United States Attorneys' Offices, other federal agencies and bureaus, and legal assistance providers.

To learn more, visit our website:
Servicemembers.gov



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SEEKING STRONGER PROTECTIONS

- The Department proposed, for approval by Congress, a package of amendments designed to further strengthen legal protections for members of the military, such as:
 - requiring parties seeking default judgments against individuals to first check Department of Defense records to determine military duty status;
 - increasing penalties that employers, lenders and landlords will face for violating laws designed to protect servicemembers;
 - expanding the number and types of cases the United States may bring in defense of servicemembers attempting to return to their civilian employment upon completion of their military service;
 - expanding the available remedies for violations of the voting rights of servicemembers and their families while they are overseas;
 - affording dependent family members the same state residency rights as the servicemember; and
 - requiring states to recognize a servicemember spouse's professional licenses from other states.

FOR THE MILITARY COMMUNITY

- The Department maintains the website **Servicemembers.gov** to provide servicemembers, veterans and their families with information on the laws that protect them and the legal resources within their communities.
- The Department provides a training curriculum for veterans treatment courts. These courts promote recovery and stability for veterans who become involved in the criminal justice system and who are also struggling with mental health issues or battling addictions.
- The Department fields calls from servicemembers, veterans and their family members and strives to provide callers with contact information for local legal resources and education on the statutes that protect their rights.

DEPARTMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- As part of a September 2014 SCRA settlement between the United States and three separate owners or servicers of private and federally guaranteed student loans (collectively "Sallie Mae"), 77,795 checks were distributed to individual servicemembers. These payments represent more than \$60 million in compensation for servicemembers having been charged excess interest on their student loans.
- Under the SCRA provisions of the April 2012 National Mortgage Settlement (a settlement involving five of the nation's largest mortgage servicers), 2,413 servicemembers will receive a total of more than \$311 million in payments because of alleged wrongful mortgage foreclosures.
- Included in an April 2015 UOCAVA settlement agreement with the State of Illinois, the special elections to fill a vacancy in an Illinois congressional district were scheduled so that absentee ballots were sent according to legally required deadlines, ensuring that overseas military ballots were received and counted in time.
- Under a February 2016 USERRA settlement with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the City of Somerville, Mass., a Marine Corps Reservist and Somerville firefighter received more than \$15,000 in back pay and was permitted to take a missed examination for promotion to the rank of captain.
- The Department facilitates and coordinates listening sessions between Department leaders and members of the military to identify the legal issues impacting today's servicemembers.

LEGAL EDUCATION

- The Department provides training to United States Attorneys' Offices and civil litigation attorneys on USERRA and UOCAVA protections.
- The Department develops training materials for military service judge advocates and paralegals to enhance legal assistance for servicemembers and veterans.
- The Department produces toolkits for legal practitioners that address the specialized laws and resources available to stop or respond to consumer fraud targeting servicemembers and veterans.

