



SeniorLAW Center

Protecting the Rights of Older Pennsylvanians

MEDIA ALERT

Protecting Older Veterans Who Once Protected Us SeniorLAW Center Launches New Services for Senior Veterans 60 and Older to Fight Elder Abuse and Protect Veterans' Rights

With support of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, the nonprofit SeniorLAW Center has launched an innovative, critically-needed new program to provide free legal services to protect the rights of senior veterans.

The program will address issues of housing, family law, health care, veterans benefits, abuse and scams targeted at older veterans, including misuse of power of attorney and VA fiduciary status, fraud, and identity theft, and other essential issues affecting veterans' lives, shelter and security.

Senior veterans need our help and attention every day, not just on Veterans Day.

After valiantly serving our country and all of us, and now facing the challenges of aging, senior veterans deserve our attention and respect. Over 36,000 older veterans call Philadelphia home. Many are living on low, fixed incomes; shocking numbers are facing homelessness and targeted for crime, elder abuse, and theft of the very benefits they receive for their military service or injuries incurred in battle. Focusing both on elders and veterans, this project serves two underserved populations, with the goals of enhancing safety, providing safe shelter, and strengthening their economic security.

SeniorLAW Center will provide free individual legal services to at least 150 senior veterans in critical areas of law. Three new legal intake clinics for older veterans will launch this month in Philadelphia at the Center at Journey's Way, West Oak Lane Older Adult Center and MLK Older Adult Center. Education sessions on veterans' rights will be held at each center and throughout Philadelphia. Special outreach will identify and serve the most vulnerable older vets, including those who are isolated, disabled, chronically ill, low-income, homebound, and/or over 75 years of age. An informational campaign will raise awareness of victimization of older veterans, reaching at least 1,000 individuals and organizations. Training for groups serving veterans will help others recognize and respond to various forms of elder abuse. A corps of senior veterans will help advise the project.

"I don't have words to describe my outrage that anyone in this country would target and exploit our veterans in their older years," said Patrick Murphy, Iraq war veteran, former Congressman, MSNBC host and attorney. "I've been proud to partner with SeniorLAW Center's staff and leadership for

several years to celebrate the contributions of senior veterans and do what's right for them, and am very proud to support this terrific new project."

"Elder abuse, any abuse, is shameful," said Albert Dandridge, Marine, Vietnam veteran and Chancellor of the Philadelphia Bar Association. "However, anyone who would abuse someone who has protected us is particularly despicable."

"Having proudly served in the U.S. Army Reserve, I am now proud to continue my service fighting for veterans who need legal assistance," said Cateria McCabe, SeniorLAW Center attorney, who will help lead the project.

Elder abuse affects more than 5 million Americans each year, adding more than \$5.3 billion to the nation's annual health expenditures. One out of every ten people 60 and older who live at home suffers abuse, neglect or exploitation. It is estimated that only one in 24 cases of elder abuse is reported to authorities.

Philadelphia has the largest percentage of seniors of the 10 largest cities in the country, and one of the poorest. One in five Pennsylvanians are now senior citizens, and by the year 2020, 1 in 4 Pennsylvania residents will be 60 and older. 20% of Philadelphia seniors live at or near poverty and more than half live below 200% of the poverty level. Research shows that at this income level, it is difficult to pay for one or more basic needs: food, shelter and medication.

SeniorLAW Center is a nonprofit legal services organization seeking justice for Pennsylvania's seniors. Based in Philadelphia, SeniorLAW Center protects the rights of older Pennsylvanians through free legal representation, education and advocacy, including its statewide PA SeniorLAW HelpLine (1.877.PA SR LAW). SeniorLAW Center has served over 300,000 older Pennsylvanians since its founding in 1978, including seniors at risk of homelessness, eviction and foreclosure, survivors of elder abuse, grandparents raising grandchildren, those facing exploitation and fraud, and other elders 60 -100+ years old. SeniorLAW Center also works to make lasting change for Pennsylvania seniors and their families with over 100 nonprofit partners and coalitions, including the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's Elder Law Task Force and new Advisory Council for Elder Justice.

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