



Brad D. Schimel
Wisconsin Attorney General

P.O. Box 7857
Madison, WI 53707-7857

NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 10, 2017

**Deceptive Veterans Charity Dissolves Following Action by
State Charity Regulators**
*Charity Raised Money Saying Donations Would Help Local Vets,
But Had No Local Programs*

Madison, Wis. – Today, Attorney General Brad Schimel, on behalf of the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions (DFI), announced a settlement between 24 states and VietNow National Headquarters, Inc., an Illinois nonprofit corporation registered as a charitable organization in many states including Wisconsin. The settlement resulted in the organization’s dissolution.

“VietNow lied about supporting veterans, and instead took advantage of Wisconsin taxpayers’ generosity,” said Attorney General Schimel. “DOJ is committed to protecting consumers from predatory organizations, such as VietNow.”

Starting in March 2015, VietNow—which also uses the name VeteransNow— raised money using deceptive telemarketing solicitation scripts. The scripts, which were used by professional fundraiser Corporations of Character, told potential donors that VietNow gave a minimum of 12 percent after expenses back to veterans in the donors’ state; other scripts stated that donations helped local veterans in the donors’ state. But in response to the states’ investigation, VietNow admitted that it had not funded any programs that assisted veterans in most states. Other VietNow scripts claimed that VietNow provided “medical facilities and treatment” to veterans, but again, VietNow’s response identified no such programs.

In its most recent financial statement, VietNow reported raising nearly \$2 million nationwide. In Wisconsin alone, VietNow raised \$65,525 in a nine month period from July 1, 2016 through April 1, 2017. However, most of this cash was paid to fundraisers, with less than 5% of funds raised going to its charitable programs.

The settlement resolves the allegations and investigations by appointing a receiver to dissolve VietNow and obtains injunctive relief against VietNow's directors and officers and requires their cooperation in investigations of VietNow's professional fundraisers. Upon dissolution, VietNow's remaining funds will be paid to two national and well-respected veterans' charities, Fisher House Foundation and Operation Homefront.

Approximately 9,500 charitable organizations are actively registered in Wisconsin and can be searched by visiting DFI's website — www.wdfi.org — where complaints can also be filed for questionable charitable practices. Active registrations are not an endorsement by the state. Before giving to any cause the public should research how long the organization has been operating as well as its financial status and where the donated money goes.

The settlement agreement is attached.