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## Disabled Veterans Benefits

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When a soldier suffers a life altering injury in combat, they receive disability benefits from the government. Those benefits are supposed to be only for the wounded soldier, but in some cases that's not happening.

A federal law states a disabled veteran's benefits cannot be used as divisible assets during bankruptcy, in a divorce and for child support. But a group founded to make sure that doesn't happen, says some state judges aren't paying any attention to the law.

"She wasn't disabled, she was an able bodied, non-military person," says Jere Beery who works for the veterans advocacy group, Operation Firing For Effect. He joined the group after a judge ruled Beery had to give a portion of his disability benefits to his ex-wife. He adds, "My wife never had to take the medications I had to take, she doesn't have the disfiguring scars I have, she doesn't wake up in the middle of the night with strange noises."

The Vietnam Veteran refused to pay and filed complaints. Eventually his wife said she didn't want the benefits anymore. But it got Beery involved in helping others fight the same battle he did. "Deep in mind we're talking about the most severely disabled veterans from combat situations, we're talking about wounds, IED, brain trauma, amputees, bed ridden veterans," according to Beery.

And it's just not men, it's also disabled female veterans experiencing these problems when they get divorced or declare bankruptcy. Gene Simes, National Chairman of Operation Firing for Effect, says he's worked with veterans all over the country and it boils down to judges aren't educated about disabled veterans rights. Simes say, "When a judge tells you, you have rights, no constitutional rights that judge is violating the rules of this nation and what he is set to be. He is just as guilty if he was a crook himself."

Once a judge makes their ruling, there's really nothing that can be done other than to violate the order. So their goal is to make sure judges understand what it means to be a disabled veteran. "They've gotten away with it for so many years and used so many bad rulings as reference cases it's a ways of life in the judicial system," adds Beery.

The group is monitoring 40 cases all over the country of judges mishandling disability benefits. There are a few going on in the Quad Cities, but the information isn't public.