



Department of Justice

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

BEFORE THE

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

FOR A HEARING ON

**LEGISLATION; INCLUDING H.R. 2409 AND A DRAFT BILL TO AMEND
THE SERVICEMEMBERS CIVIL RELIEF ACT**

PRESENTED

MAY 23, 2018

Statement for the Record
U.S. Department of Justice
Before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
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Chairman Arrington, Ranking Member Walz, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of Justice (“Department”) on pending legislation amending the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (“SCRA”), 50 U.S.C. § 3901, *et seq.*

The Justice Department is proud to serve our nation's men and women in uniform, who make great personal sacrifices in service to our country. The Department is committed to protecting servicemembers’ rights by prioritizing vigorous enforcement of the SCRA. The SCRA provides protections for military members as they enter active duty and covers such issues as mortgage foreclosures, default judgments, vehicle repossessions, lease and other contract terminations, and interest rates, among other protections.

These protections are in place because servicemembers should not have to worry that during their military service their cars will be repossessed, their homes will be foreclosed on, or their spouses and children will be evicted. Over the past decade, the Department’s SCRA enforcement efforts have resulted in over \$467 million in monetary relief awarded to over 119,000 servicemembers.

In addition to our enforcement work under the SCRA, the Department has launched the Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative (“Initiative”). The Initiative’s goal is to coordinate and expand the Department’s existing efforts to protect servicemembers and veterans through outreach, enforcement assistance, and training. Since January 1, 2017, the Initiative has presented on the SCRA, veteran employments rights, and other Department efforts related to servicemembers and veterans at 27 events nationwide attended by approximately 3,725 servicemembers and legal professionals across all five branches of the military.

H.R. 2409

To allow servicemembers to terminate their cable, satellite television, and Internet access service contracts while deployed.

Section 3956 of the SCRA, 50 U.S.C. § 3956, currently allows servicemembers to terminate cellular telephone service contracts if they receive orders to relocate for a period of at least 90 days to a location that does not support the contract. H.R. 2409 would expand this protection to allow servicemembers to also terminate cable, satellite television, and Internet access services, provided the same conditions are met.

The Department of Justice supports the goals of H.R. 2409, which would improve the SCRA by updating the legislation to contemplate newer technologies used by servicemembers.

We look forward to working with the subcommittee on any technical assistance needed to advance this important amendment.

H.R. _____

To amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to provide for the termination by spouse of a lessee of certain leases when the lessee dies while in military service.

Section 3955 of the SCRA, 50 U.S.C. § 3955, currently permits servicemembers to terminate residential leases “at any time after . . . the date of the lessee’s military orders.” 50 U.S.C. §3955(a)(1). This protection applies to individuals who enter military service and servicemembers who, “while in military service, execute[] a lease and thereafter receive[] military orders for a permanent change of station or to deploy with a military unit, or as an individual in support of a military operation, for a period of not less than 90 days.” *Id.* at § 3955(b)(1). Proposed bill H.R. ____ would amend Section 3955 to permit the spouse of a fallen servicemember to terminate a residential lease entered into by that servicemember if that military member died while in military service. The ability to terminate such a lease would exist for the one-year period beginning on the date of the servicemember’s death.

The Department supports the goals of this draft bill. We look forward to working with the subcommittee on any technical assistance needed to advance this important amendment.

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The Department appreciates the opportunity to submit its views on servicemembers civil rights legislation currently pending before the Subcommittee. We stand ready to provide any technical assistance on the bills discussed above and will strive to work with the Subcommittee in advancing important legislative efforts to strengthen the SCRA.