

Guard Your Identity and Know Your Rights

Securing your financial future goes way beyond having a budget. It also includes being proactive by protecting your identity and knowing your rights as a member of the military under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) and Military Lending Act (MLA).

Identity Theft

Identity theft occurs when someone steals an individual's personal information and uses it without his or her permission to open fraudulent accounts and make unauthorized purchases. Identity theft is a serious problem that can ruin a person's credit and good name and can take significant time, effort, and money to resolve. The **Federal Trade Commission** has received over 1.1 million reports of identity theft totaling over \$8.8 billion.

Warning Signs of Identity Theft:



- Missing bills
- Unauthorized accounts on credit reports
- Unsolicited credit cards or bills
- Credit denial

Ways to Defend Against Identity Theft:

- Safeguard mail, wallet, purse, receipts, accounts/statements
- Notify creditors of updates to address
- Check credit reports regularly at www.annualcreditreport.com
- Place active-duty alerts or security freezes on credit reports prior to deployment

Resources: For more information, contact the National Consumer Credit Reporting Agencies:

TransUnion **1-800-680-7289**, Experian **1-888-397-3742**, Equifax **1-800-525-6285**, Federal Trade Commission (FTC)

1-877-ID-Theft or www.consumer.gov, or Military Consumer (MC) managed by the FTC www.militaryconsumer.gov.

Servicemembers Civil Relief Act

In 2003, the Soldiers and Sailors Civil Relief Act was rewritten and renamed the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA). The law spells out protections for members of the U.S. military.

Who's Protected:

- Active-Duty Soldiers
- Reservists
- Members of the National Guard (when on active service)
- SCRA (for all) begins on the first day of active duty, which means when the person leaves home for basic or occupational training.

Legal Protections:

Termination of cellphone contracts; automobile leases; termination of rental leases; evictions from housing; relief from foreclosures; installment contract protection; 6% interest rate cap on debts before active duty; stay of court proceedings; relief from enforcement of obligations, liabilities, and taxes.

Military Lending Act

Under the Military Lending Act (MLA), active-duty Soldiers (including active Guard and Reserves and covered dependents), cannot be charged an interest rate higher than 36% on most consumer loans, along with some other protections.

Resources:

For more information about the SCRA, visit www.militaryonesource.mil and search the keyword "SCRA" and for MLA, visit www.consumerfinance.gov.



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