

## A Time to Help.

*Veterans and Their Families Need Your Assistance.*

From 1933 to 1988, veterans were frustrated by laws that prohibited judicial review of denials of their claims for federal veterans benefits. Since the landmark Veterans' Judicial Review Act in 1988, veterans denied benefits by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) can appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

Thousands of veterans or their survivors have filed appeals in the Court. Most cases involve claims for VA disability or death benefits.

Unfortunately, for many veterans the promise of effective judicial review has proved elusive. A majority of those who appeal to the Court do not have a representative at the time they file their appeal.

Unrepresented veterans are at a significant disadvantage in litigating against the VA General Counsel's Office, which represents VA in all Court proceedings. Mentally and physically disabled veterans may be especially disadvantaged.

The program offers attorneys an uncommon opportunity to repay those who served. Please consider participating and helping veterans and their families prove entitlement to benefits.



A JOINT PROGRAM OF:



Funded by a grant administered by the Legal Services Corporation

“I was very pleased with how the Pro Bono people came in and took things to the next level. Being a veteran, this mattered a lot to me and I hope it will be a case that others will see and can use.”

— VETERAN MIKE MCMANUS,  
RECEIVED PROGRAM ASSISTANCE IN 2010

### *Executive Board of the Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program*

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“When the Pro Bono people get into the picture, they do all the work for you.”

— VETERAN NED MAESTAS,  
RECEIVED PROGRAM ASSISTANCE IN 2005

*They fought for us.*



*Now we fight for them.*

PROVIDING PRO BONO  
REPRESENTATION BEFORE  
THE U.S. COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR VETERANS CLAIMS

## A Team Who Cares.

### *The Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program*

In 1991, the U.S. Court of Veterans Appeals (now the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims) had a large pro se caseload and asked Congress to reallocate a portion of its own budget to securing representation for these claimants. As a result, a consortium of four organizations received a grant to operate a pro bono program. The organizations that comprise the consortium are The American Legion, the Disabled American Veterans, the National Veterans Legal Services Program, and Paralyzed Veterans of America. The program recruits volunteer attorneys to represent appellants before the Court without charge. The program screens cases so that pro bono representation is provided in cases with merit, and offers comprehensive training and support to participating attorneys.

## A Program that Works.

The cornerstones of The Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program are screening of cases for merit and providing attorneys with training and mentoring. The program's experienced veterans law staff screen the appeal of every individual who seeks pro bono representation. Cases that appear to have merit and meet income-eligibility guidelines are referred to volunteer attorneys.

Before accepting an appeal, all attorneys must attend a one-day training program. DVD or online training is available for those unable to attend in person. Each participant, upon accepting a referral, will receive a free copy of the latest version of the Veterans Benefits Manual, a comprehensive guide to litigating veterans benefits claims; a memorandum discussing the facts and legal issues in the appeal; and the name and contact information for an assigned mentor from one of the sponsoring organizations. Mentors are available to discuss litigation strategy, provide sample briefs, review draft pleadings, and conduct a moot court if oral argument is ordered.

## An Experience for You.

### *Why You Should Do Pro Bono Work Through the Consortium*

There are many ways an attorney can do pro bono work. But participating in the Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program offers several advantages:

- The program provides one of the few opportunities to obtain appellate litigation experience while performing pro bono service. In addition to brief writing or drafting a joint motion to remand or settlement agreement, some cases involve oral argument before a panel of three judges.
- Representation before the Court can provide an opportunity to make new law. Because the Court is relatively new, some of the cases present issues of first impression.
- The program provides significant support and training to ensure that your time is used effectively:
  - › cases are prescreened for merit in advance of assignment;
  - › volunteer attorneys are quickly oriented to the case with a memorandum describing the facts and legal issues;
  - › further assistance is available both from the assigned case monitor and assigned mentor;
  - › volunteers participate in an in-depth full-day training seminar and receive a detailed practice manual after case referral.
- Malpractice insurance is provided.
- CLE credit is available. Attorneys licensed in states in which the program has not sought CLE credit must apply for CLE individually.

## How You Can Help

To date, the Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program has trained approximately 2,800 attorneys, who have accepted more than 3,600 Program cases. We are looking for more volunteer attorneys who can agree to represent at least one appellant before the Court.

Information for attorneys interested in volunteering is available at [www.vetsprobono.org/volunteer-today](http://www.vetsprobono.org/volunteer-today).

[www.vetsprobono.org](http://www.vetsprobono.org)  
(202) 265-8305, ext. 118

