

# Ways to Serve Veterans

by Sherri Marie Carr



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We've all heard it . . . the call to help others; it's indicative of why we are in the legal profession. But do you still want to do more than you are currently doing? With nearly 20 million veterans, according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)<sup>1</sup>, there is a need to help this group with legal issues.

Many of us have read in these pages about the noteworthy things that have been done and are being done to help veterans, as written about by former Federal Bar Association national President Judge Michael J. Newman. If you'd like to do more, consider some of these suggestions.

First, I reiterate Judge Newman's suggestions; serve through a law school's veterans law clinic or consider helping by providing wills for veterans pro bono through the Federal Bar Association's national event on Nov. 9th.

Second, you could become an accredited attorney with the VA. The process to become an accredited attorney is relatively simple and takes a minimal amount of time to do so. Most notably, there are CLE requirements and an application process. After this, you are highlighted in your jurisdiction on the VA website.

What does an accredited attorney do? They help with (1) claims for pension with aid and attendance; (2) compensation, SMC, and DIC with aid and attendance or housebound allowance; (3) claims for compensation and DIC; (4) enrolling eligible participants in veterans health care; (5) applying for a state veterans home; and (6) applying for burial benefits; to name a few of the things available to help with. To put it simply, an accredited attorney helps with veterans

benefits; this is a lengthy, time-consuming process, and most veterans who need help with this are in need of current medical care coverage. You are able to ease their circumstances by filing applicable paperwork and fielding the communication during the process.

The ethical considerations are numerous. For instance, if you are going to take on a client in this area, you need to be able to commit for multiple years. You are not allowed to charge fees at certain stages in this process. And many of these veterans are vulnerable; you must be upfront with them about the length of time involved, likelihood of the outcome, and what will happen between the beginning and the culmination of the process.

Finally, the Federal Bar Association has a Veterans and Military Law Section with a Board of Directors. Consider joining this section and serving on the board. You will find out about CLE opportunities, newsworthy movements, and pieces of legislation, as well as have opportunities to network with other members of the legal profession who serve veterans.

I thank you for your consideration of each of these options, all you do to further the legal profession—and the help you provide to our veterans. ☺

## Endnote

<sup>1</sup>DEP'T OF VET. AFF., DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS STATISTICS AT A GLANCE (Jan. 2018), [https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/Quickfacts/Stats\\_at\\_a\\_glance\\_2\\_2\\_18.PDF](https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/Quickfacts/Stats_at_a_glance_2_2_18.PDF).

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