



## Federal Bar Association

*Office of the President*

### **ASHLEY L. BELLEAU**

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May 23, 2011

The Honorable Barack H. Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write to urge your prompt attention to filling three vacancies on the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

The United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims reviews the decisions of the Board of Veterans Appeals. Public Law 110-389 expanded the number of judicial positions on the Court from seven to nine judges, and became effective December 31, 2009. To date there have been no nominations for either of those positions. In addition, a third vacancy on the court has been created by the retirement of Chief Judge William P. Green, Jr.

The workload situation at the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims is increasingly worsening. The number of appeals to the Court continues to increase, delaying final decisions on benefits for those who have served our country and now need services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Chief Judge Bruce Kasold has recalled a number of senior judges to assist the Court meet its escalating caseload.

The membership of our association includes attorneys who practice before the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. As a matter of policy the FBA takes no position on the merits of specific nominees to the federal courts. Our interest is in prompt, dispositive action in filling vacancies with well-qualified candidates.

As you consider naming well-qualified candidates to the Court, we respectfully recommend that any nominee possess active military service and /or extensive work in the field of veteran's advocacy. Given the large numbers of minority citizens in the veteran population, considerable effort should be given to address the diversity of the Court. For example twenty-seven percent of the total Native American population is either a member or a veteran of the Armed Services. Large numbers of Hispanic and African American citizens are also veterans, and a growing number of women are pursuing claims appealable to the Court. There are many qualified and willing candidates within these populations, and they should be given serious evaluation in choosing nominees.

In his second inaugural address Abraham Lincoln observed that it was the duty of the nation “to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan.” We urge you to nominate qualified candidates to the vacancies on the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims as soon as practicable. Your prompt action will do much to carry out the nation’s commitment to our veterans.

We thank you for your support of the nation’s veterans, the federal courts and your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ashley L. Belleau". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and 'B'.

Ashley L. Belleau  
National President

cc: Chief Judge Bruce Kasold, U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims  
Carol Wild Scott, FBA Veterans Law Section Chair  
Jack D. Lockridge, FBA Executive Director