



20

SERVICE TO VETERANS—OUR NATION'S DEFENDERS

18



**The Veterans  
Consortium**

PRO BONO PROGRAM®

WE BELIEVE that our veterans  
—*our nation's defenders*—  
deserve the care, benefits,  
and compensation they  
were promised, and the best  
legal services, free of charge,  
to meet their challenges.★





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# THE HONORABLE TAMMY DUCKWORTH



U.S. SENATOR TAMMY DUCKWORTH is an Iraq War Veteran, Purple Heart recipient and former Assistant Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

She was among the first Army women to fly combat missions during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Duckworth served in the Reserve Forces for 23 years before retiring from military service in 2014 at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. She was elected to the U.S. Senate in 2016 after representing Illinois's Eighth Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives for two terms.

Duckworth attended college at the University of Hawaii and earned a Master of Arts in International Affairs from the George Washington University. Following graduation, Duckworth, who is fluent in Thai and Indonesian, moved to Illinois and began pursuing a Ph.D. in Political Science at Northern Illinois University.

In 2004, Duckworth was deployed to Iraq as a Blackhawk helicopter pilot for the Illinois Army National Guard. On November 12, 2004, her helicopter was hit by an RPG and Duckworth lost her legs and partial use of her right arm. Following her recovery, she became Director of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs, working to create a tax credit for employers who hired Veterans, establish a first-in-the-nation 24/7 Veterans crisis hotline and develop innovative programs to improve Veterans' access to housing and health care.

In 2009, President Obama appointed Duckworth to be Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs. At VA, Duckworth coordinated the joint initiative with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to end Veteran homelessness. She also created the Office of Online Communications to improve the VA's accessibility, especially among young Veterans, and also worked to address the unique challenges that Native American and female Veterans face.

In the U.S. Senate, Duckworth serves on several influential committees that give her an important platform to advocate for Illinois's working families and entrepreneurs: the Environment & Public Works Committee; the Energy & Natural Resources Committee; the Commerce, Science, & Transportation Committee; and the Small Business & Entrepreneurship Committee. As Senator, she advocates for practical, common-sense solutions needed to move our country and our state forward like: rebuilding our crumbling infrastructure, keeping our water systems safe and lead-free, growing manufacturing jobs while supporting minority-owned small businesses, investing in communities that have been ignored for too long, and making college more affordable for all Americans. And Duckworth continues with her lifelong mission of supporting, protecting and keeping the promises we've made to our Veterans as well as ensuring that we stand fully behind the troops we send into danger overseas. ★

TAMMY DUCKWORTH  
ILLINOIS



## United States Senate

COMMITTEES  
ARMED SERVICES  
COMMERCE, SCIENCE,  
AND TRANSPORTATION  
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS  
SMALL BUSINESS  
AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

03

Throughout the past 26 years, The Veterans Consortium (TVC) has provided critical and necessary work fighting for our Nation's defenders. I am pleased to support The Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program and the thousands of attorneys who have provided pro bono legal services through their TVC National Volunteer Corps. If it wasn't for the heartfelt efforts of these volunteers, thousands of Veterans would still be unable to access the care and benefits they earned.


Our Nation's Veterans answered the call to serve when our country needed them most and in return, our country promised to take care of them when they came home. As an Iraq War Veteran, and somebody who served Veterans during my tenure at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), I understand the unique needs Veterans face when hanging up the uniform. The process can be incredibly challenging, and at times it can be frustratingly difficult trying to access the support needed to adjust to civilian life.

I had the pleasure of being invited to the 2018 TVC Mission Partner Awards Ceremony and to present Leo Dombrowski, Esq., a fellow Illinoisan, with TVC's Chairman's Award for his tireless dedication while representing the widow of a WWII Army veteran. The Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program has served thousands of Veterans by providing free legal services for issues ranging from the benefits appeals process to military discharge upgrades. They voluntarily take on the training required for top-notch results - and the numbers show. Over 82 percent of the cases taken on by TVC volunteer attorneys result in favorable outcomes for Veterans and their families. Patriots such as Leo, and TVC's National Volunteer Corps, are a force to be reckoned with.

The Veterans Consortium's devotion to keeping the promises our country made to those who have borne the battle inspires me. Although volunteer attorneys are spread out from coast-to-coast, all are united in a shared passion to provide justice for Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors.

Thank you to The Veterans Consortium - from the bottom of my heart. I know that the Veteran community joins me in thanking you as well. I wish you continued success.

Sincerely,

  
Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator

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# ABOUT THE VETERANS CONSORTIUM

For over 26 years, TVC has been providing the best legal services in federal venues to veterans and their families, caregivers, and survivors, no matter where in the world they live. Our TVC National Volunteer Corps<sup>SM</sup>, Mission Partners, and dedicated staff have handled more than 50,000 legal requests from veterans and their loved ones, trained over 4,300 attorneys from law firms and corporate legal departments across the country, helped law schools establish and sustain veterans law programs or legal clinics, and succeeded in 82% of our federal cases at the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, the Federal Circuit, and the Supreme Court - where our volunteers have achieved two unanimous decisions for veterans. These achievements translate into over \$110 million in pro bono legal services provided on behalf of veterans in need.

TVC operates the federal Pro Bono Program for veterans—created by Congress in 1992—on behalf of the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, through a competitively-awarded LSC grant. As the leading national 501(c)(3) charity providing legal services in federal venues for veterans in need, we provide legal counsel, free of charge, from our TVC National Volunteer Corps<sup>SM</sup>, which consists of more than 2,500 attorneys, paralegals, and related pro bono professionals. We recruit volunteer attorneys and provide them specialized training, mentors, case materials, and other focused resources to enable and enhance their success. Concurrently, our staff conducts outreach to eligible veterans, diligently screens their cases to identify those with an issue of merit, and carefully matches them with one of our pro bono attorneys best suited to win each case. The Veterans Consortium was founded in 1992 and has operated continuously since. ★



# CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

TOGETHER, we must help our nation honor our commitments to the veterans we serve.



**T**HE PAST YEAR WAS A TIME OF great transition and transformation for The Veterans Consortium, but one thing always remains constant - our commitment to the federal Veterans Pro Bono Program. In 2018, we steadily expanded our capability and capacity to make a real difference in the lives of veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors. It was a privilege to work with our dedicated volunteers, mission partners and our generous supporters who make our work possible.

This annual report describes the strength and value of the services The Veterans Consortium provides to those in need worldwide and the difference that each member of the Consortium team makes in the lives of veterans we serve.

In this annual report, you will read two compelling case studies. The first is the saga of Mr. Willie Cousin, who served in the U.S. Army and injured his back during the Korean War.

He filed his first disability claim in 1954 and was denied multiple times as he continued to suffer without receiving the care and benefits he had earned. Andrew Dufresne and Kenneth Albridge, members of our TVC National Volunteer Corps<sup>SM</sup>, took on the case and successfully represented Mr. Cousin before the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims and then the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.

The second is the Discharge Upgrade case of Mr. Anthony Aponte. Danica Gonzalves, who manages the TVC Discharge Upgrade Program<sup>SM</sup>, successfully represented Mr. Aponte, a U.S. Marine, who was injured in a Humvee rollover. He suffered from a traumatic brain injury (TBI) and developed post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) from the accident. He received an Other Than Honorable discharge due to misconduct related to the TBI and PTSD and was unable to access the medical benefits he desperately needed.

Together, we must help our nation honor our commitments to the veterans we serve, provide them equal access to justice, and secure what they were promised when they took an oath to defend our country. Together, we must collaborate to advance our shared mission by meeting the current and emerging challenges our veterans face, increasing our outreach, and developing ways to further support our volunteers as they deliver excellent pro bono legal services.

We look forward to the coming year and the great work that is still to come. Please join us by volunteering, collaborating as a mission partner, becoming a donor, or spreading the word about our program. ★

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Ann Gilleece".

**Mary Ann Gilleece, Esq.**  
*Chairman*



# The Veterans Consortium

PRO BONO PROGRAM®

★ **Handled** nearly  
**50,000** legal requests  
from veterans and their loved ones



★ **82%** lifetime  
**success rate** for federal cases



★ Recruited, trained, and mentored  
**4,237** attorneys  
across the U.S.



★ **Value** of donated  
attorney services

**\$115M**



★ Operates a national  
**helpline**  
that provides valuable legal information

AS OF SEPTEMBER 2018



CONNECT WITH US



[www.vetsprobono.org](http://www.vetsprobono.org)  
@vetsprobono #theyfoughtforus

For more information about our program, please contact us:  
Phone: 202-628-8164 | Toll Free: 888-838-7727 | Email: [mail@vetsprobono.org](mailto:mail@vetsprobono.org)  
[www.vetsprobono.org](http://www.vetsprobono.org)



— WE CONTINUE to be blessed with —  
volunteers who work and achieve  
amazing results day after day.

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



**2** 018 WAS ANOTHER RECORD year for The Veterans Consortium. For the third year in a row, the dedicated members of our TVC National Volunteer Corps<sup>SM</sup>, in collaboration with our hard-working TVC staff, doubled the number of veterans served over the prior year. These valuable services for thousands of our nation's veterans and their families, caregivers, and survivors make a real difference in their lives. We continue to be blessed with volunteers who work tirelessly and achieve amazing results day after day.

I'm also pleased to report that this year we saw a dramatic increase in pro bono service from government employees. The Veterans Consortium has had government volunteers in the past, but this year we partnered with the VA's General Counsel Jim Byrne\*, Richard Hipolit and Lara Eilhardt on the VA OGC team, in a broader effort. This partnership resulted in attorneys and paralegals from 13 federal agencies performing their personal pro bono

service at our Veterans Pro Bono Clinic that we operate on Fridays through our Medical-Legal Partnership with the DC VA Medical Center. Hundreds of veterans and their families benefited from this partnership in 2018. The synergy at the DC VAMC between medical and legal professionals working side-by-side is truly impressive to see. Our TVC National Volunteer Corps<sup>SM</sup> is comprised of even more robust and diverse force for good from law firms, corporate general counsel offices, law schools, non-profits, and government (Federal, State, Local, and Tribal) agencies.

We are always looking for new volunteer attorneys and paralegals to help veterans and their loved ones receive the care, benefits, and compensation they were promised and the best legal services—free of charge—to meet their challenges. I encourage you to learn more about opportunities to participate in the federal Veterans Pro Bono Program in support of the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, our TVC Discharge Upgrade Program<sup>SM</sup>,

and our TVC Veterans Pro Bono Legal Clinic at the DC VA Medical Center.

I would like to close by thanking all our mission partner organizations, volunteers, donors, board members, and supporters for making 2018 another successful year. I also want to express my deep appreciation for TVC's staff for rising to the challenges, bringing their best to the mission every day. It is truly a privilege to support and be associated with such professionals. ★

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edmund M. Glabus". The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a light-colored background.

**Edmund M. Glabus**  
*Executive Director*

\*At the time of this publication, The Honorable Jim Byrne was nominated and confirmed by the U.S. Senate to serve as Deputy Secretary of the VA.

# THE HONORABLE JOSEPH L. FALVEY, JR.

## New Judge Named to the U.S. Court Appeals for Veterans Claims

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**J**UDGE JOSEPH L. FALVEY, JR., was nominated by President Donald J. Trump on 23 January 2018, confirmed by the Senate 26 April 2018, and appointed a Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims in May 2018.

Before his judicial appointment, Judge Falvey was the District Counsel, Detroit District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. As District Counsel, Judge Falvey supervised the District legal staff and was responsible for resolving issues related to statutory and regulatory compliance, government contracting and fiscal law, labor and employment law, environmental law, claims, real property, standards of conduct/ethics, procurement fraud, and litigation.

Previously, Judge Falvey served as an Assistant United States Attorney, in the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Michigan. As a member of the National Security Unit, he was responsible for investigating and prosecuting matters involving national security including matters involving individuals and organizations that engage in foreign counter-intelligence, espionage, and those who plan, financially support, or carry out international and domestic terrorist activities. Before joining the United States Attorney's Office, Judge Falvey was a Professor of Law at Ave Maria School of Law from 1999 to 2007 and the University of Detroit School of Law from 1994 to 1998, where he taught evidence, trial advocacy, military law, national security law, and criminal law and procedure.

Judge Falvey is also a retired Marine Corps officer who began his military career as an Armor Officer in 1981 and served as a Tank Platoon Commander, Battalion Adjutant, and Anti-Tank (TOW) Company Executive Officer. From 1984 to 1987, he attended law school through the Marine Corps's Funded Legal Education Program. Certified as a Judge Advocate in 1987, Judge Falvey was initially assigned to Camp Pendleton, California, where he served as a prosecutor or defense counsel in more than 250 courts-martial. He also served as the Senior Judge Advocate for the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable). In 1990, Judge Falvey attended The Judge Advocate General's School of the Army, and he was subsequently assigned as the Deputy Head, Military Law Branch, Judge Advocate Division, Headquarters Marine Corps.

In 1994, Judge Falvey left active duty and continued to serve in the U. S. Marine Corps Reserve. From 1994 to 1998, Judge Falvey was a Special Courts-Martial Judge and presided over more than 100 courts-martial. In 1998, he was assigned as an Assistant Staff Judge Advocate for Operational Law at U.S. Central Command, and he was mobilized in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. In this capacity, he worked closely with various agencies of the U.S. Government on matters related to the Global War on Terrorism and he deployed to Afghanistan in 2002. Judge Falvey



subsequently served as an Appellate Judge for the U.S. Navy-Marine Corps Court of Criminal Appeals. From 2008 to 2010, Judge Falvey served as the Commanding Officer, Marine Forces Reserve, Legal Services Support Section. Judge Falvey retired in 2011 having attained the rank of Colonel.

His decorations include the Legion of Merit (with star), Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Navy-Marine Corps Commendation Medal, Joint Service Achievement Medal, and Navy-Marine Corps Achievement Medal. Judge Falvey was selected as both the ABA Outstanding Young Military Lawyer (1990) and the Judge Advocate Association Outstanding Career Judge Advocate (2011).

Judge Falvey holds a bachelor of arts in economics from the University of Notre Dame, a juris doctor, cum laude, from Notre Dame Law School, and a master of laws, Distinguished Graduate, from The Judge Advocate General's School.

Judge Falvey and his wife, Anne, have nine children and they are licensed foster parents who have opened their home to more than a dozen abused and neglected children. ★

# CASE STUDY: U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit

**W**ILLIE COUSIN, A 90-YEAR-OLD

Korean War-era veteran, still laments that his ship got turned back in Guam, and he never made it to Korea. Instead, he was sent to Fort Sheridan, IL, and while awaiting reassignment and doing some odd jobs around the base, he injured his back in the furnace room. He spent 30 days recovering in the hospital. For the next 60 years, Cousin would fight to receive disability compensation for his injury.

In a precedential case before the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, Andrew Dufresne and Kenneth Albridge, pro bono attorneys for The Veterans Consortium (TVC), earned a victory for Cousin in September 2018. It was a long time coming. Cousin first filed for disability compensation in 1954. He was denied and didn't try again until 1980, again in 1982 and once more in 2010 – all while living in constant pain with a worsening degenerative condition known as spondylolysis (a stress fracture in the vertebrae). Tired of going it alone, Cousin contacted TVC for help in 2015. Dufresne, a patent litigator at Michael Best Freidrich LLP at the time, was assigned the case along with his colleague, Albridge.

"We had to show that a clear and unmistakable error had been made," says Dufresne, noting that the military compensates for injuries that get worse over time. But Cousin's injury was miscategorized based on an examination that recorded no symptoms when he left the service. Yet, while on active duty, "he was so seriously injured that

the military deemed him permanently unfit to do basic activities like marching or carrying a pack."

Dufresne and Albridge's argument did not convince The United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, so an appeal to The United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit ensued. This court was a familiar venue for Dufresne, who clerked for Judge Alan Lourie there from 2011-2013. Veterans cases made up a small part of a docket jammed with patent law cases.

"It was frustrating at times," says Dufresne, remembering the many veterans' cases dismissed because the law restricts the type of review available at the circuit court. "The court's review is limited only to errors of law, in most situations."

Some cases that should have been won at the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims would come through on appeal.

"But the Federal Circuit can't review factual disputes," Dufresne says. "So even if it looked like the facts were wrong or the law was applied incorrectly, the court would have to dismiss the appeal."

Dufresne learned that TVC offered training for clerks preparing to leave the court and he signed up. He recruited Albridge to take a TVC training course and take on veterans cases, as well. They worked collaboratively on this case, with Dufresne doing the oral argument and serving as the main contact with Cousin. What Dufresne didn't anticipate was a return to the Federal Circuit.



Cousin's case was "unusual in that we had a pure legal argument and we were able to win," Dufresne says, adding that the help from TVC was integral. **"It's incredible how much support they provide to us as pro bono counsel and to veterans, as well."**

Calling the case, "an uphill battle", Albridge says the legal standard was very tough. "I'm very proud of the result. It's the right result."

Courtney Smith, Director of Volunteer Outreach and Education at TVC, screened the case in 2015. This included writing a brief summary of the merits of the case and providing suggestions on how to proceed.

"The true heroes of TVC are the many accomplished attorneys, who unselfishly give their time to assist our veterans seeking benefits that have been denied to them – sometimes for more than half a century," Smith says. "We are delighted that Mr. Cousin will be receiving retroactive pay for his service-related injury."

Cousin, who lives in Norwich, CT with Maria, his wife of 16 years, is thrilled with the decision, but regrets that it's taken so long.

"I should have had a lawyer when I first tried in 1954," he says. ★

# 2018 TVC Volunteer and Mission Partner SPRING APPRECIATION RECEPTION

**V**OLUNTEERS, SUPPORTERS AND sponsors of The Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program joined together on 24 April 2018 to recognize outstanding members of our TVC National Volunteer Corps<sup>SM</sup>.

In addition to our volunteer honorees, we were fortunate to host several distinguished U.S. Government guests, including The Honorable Tom Bowman (an alumni of our TVC National Volunteer Corps<sup>SM</sup>), VA Deputy Secretary; The Honorable Tim Hutchinson, former U.S. Representative and former U.S. Senator from Arkansas; The Honorable Don Loren, VA Assistant Secretary for Operations, Security, and Preparedness, and The Honorable Jim Byrne, VA General Counsel, who were joined by Mr. Ronald Flagg, Vice President for Legal Affairs, General Counsel, and Corporate Secretary of Legal Services Corporation. ★

TOP PHOTO (left to right) Samantha Stiltner, TVC Staff Attorney & Clinic Program Manager; Tom Bowman, VA Deputy Secretary; Jim Byrne, VA General Counsel; Mary Ann Gilleece, Chairman, TVC Executive Board; Lara Eilhardt, VA Office of the General Counsel; Don Loren, VA Assistant Secretary for Operations, Security, and Preparedness; and Ed Glabus, TVC Executive Director

BOTTOM PHOTO (left to right) Tom Bowman, Ed Glabus, and James Byrne





# SPECIAL RECOGNITION



**Chris Tyson**, Duane Morris LLP



**Jamie O'Donohue** and **Anne Ustynski** (not pictured),  
The Catholic University of America Columbus School of Law



**Katharyn Christian McGee**, Duane Morris LLP



**Steve Shahida**, Greenberg Traurig LLP



**The Honorable James Byrne**, VA General Counsel

# 2018 TVC Pro Bono Mission Partner AWARDS RECEPTION & FIRESIDE CHAT

Wednesday, 3 October 2018  
at Union Station in Washington, DC

“On behalf of our nation’s veterans, we would like to express **OUR PROFOUND GRATITUDE** for the dedicated volunteer service of our 2018 TVC Pro Bono Mission Partner Awardees.”

Mary Ann Gilleece, Esq. *Chairman of the Executive Board*

**O** **N 3 OCTOBER 2018**, The Veterans Consortium held our 2018 TVC Pro Bono Mission Partner Awards Reception and Fireside Chat at the historic and beautiful Union Station, in Washington, DC.

We were excited to once again celebrate our TVC National Volunteer Corps<sup>SM</sup> and our supporters who are making a tangible difference in the lives of veterans in need.

We enjoyed a stimulating discussion with our distinguished group of panelists in a Fireside Chat Program. Panelists included Illinois Senator Tammy Duckworth, Ms. Adria Horn, Mr. Steve Parker, and Ms. Colleen Miller, Esq. Acclaimed journalist, author and co-founder of the Bob Woodruff Foundation, Ms. Lee Woodruff, deftly moderated the discussion.

Each of these thought leaders shared their insights and experiences on issues critical to our most vulnerable veteran population, such as mental health treatment and legal aid, as well as opportunities for significant impact when pro bono professionals work together to help veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors meet their real-life challenges. ★



(left to right)  
Leigh Woodruff, Senator  
Tammy Duckworth,  
Steve Parker, Adria  
Horn, and Colleen Miller



**2018 TVC LAW FIRM PRO BONO MISSION PARTNER AWARD** *(National Leadership)*  
**Quarles & Brady LLP**



*(left to right)* Lee Woodruff, Courtney Smith, Mary Ann Gilleece, Dawn Caldart, Colleen Miller, and Michael Levey

Over the past two years, Quarles & Brady LLP has provided critical logistical support by hosting not just one, but two national training events for new members of our TVC National Volunteer Corps<sup>SM</sup> in both Milwaukee,

Wisconsin and Tampa, Florida with national webcast to training sites across the United States; by making available generous use of the firm's facilities and information technology; by encouraging many Quarles & Brady

partners and associates to take our specialized training in veterans law to prepare themselves to take appellate cases through the federal Pro Bono Program and discharge upgrade cases; by conducting significant event promotion and outreach to National, State, and Local partners to publicize the federal Pro Bono Program and opportunities to serve veterans and their loved ones; and by teaming with us to directly serve veterans in need by taking on 12 pro bono cases to date, accomplishing truly significant wins. ★

THANK YOU AND CONGRATULATIONS!



**2018 TVC LAW FIRM PRO BONO MISSION PARTNER AWARD** *(Regional Leadership)*  
**Greenberg Traurig LLP**



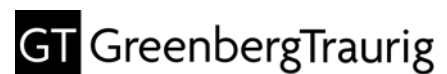
*(left to right)* Lee Woodruff, Courtney Smith, Mary Ann Gilleece, John Altenberg Jr., and Robert Mangus

Throughout the years, the Greenberg Traurig LLP pro bono team has provided critical mission support by furnishing logistical and outreach support for TVC National Volunteer Corps<sup>SM</sup> training events; by contributing generous monetary donations and in-kind donations of office equipment, information

technology equipment, furniture, and use of conference facilities; by conducting significant event promotion and outreach to National, State, and Local partners to publicize the federal Pro Bono Program and opportunities to serve veterans and their loved ones; and by teaming with TVC to directly

serve clients by taking on multiple appellate cases for veterans in need through the federal Pro Bono Program, accomplishing truly significant wins. ★

THANK YOU AND CONGRATULATIONS!



## 2018 TVC LAW FIRM/CORPORATE PRO BONO MISSION PARTNERS AWARD *(National Leadership)* **Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP and AT&T**



*(left to right)* Lee Woodruff, Courtney Smith, Mary Ann Gilleece, Steven Schulman (Akin Gump), and Bill Drexel (AT&T)

The Akin Gump/AT&T pro bono team provided critical mission support by hosting multiple TVC National Volunteer Corps<sup>SM</sup> training events in-person and by webinar across the United States; by teaming with TVC to directly serve veterans through taking on federal appellate cases and

discharge upgrade cases for veterans in need, by contributing generous donations to support TVC's mission operations, and by jointly donating an extraordinarily generous two-year sponsorship of Equal Justice Works Fellow Danica Gonzalves hosted at The Veterans Consortium.

Akin Gump and AT&T's support and active participation directly increased TVC's capacity to address cases involving Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI), and Military Sexual Trauma (MST)—especially for veterans who unjustly received “Other Than Honorable” discharges and were denied access to the health benefits and disability compensation they earned, including the mental health care they need. ★

THANK YOU AND CONGRATULATIONS!

**Akin Gump**  
 STRAUSS HAUER & FELD LLP



## 2018 TVC LAW FIRM/CORPORATE PRO BONO MISSION PARTNERS AWARD *(Regional Leadership)* **BlankRome LLP and VMware**



*(left to right)* Lee Woodruff, Courtney Smith, Mary Ann Gilleece, Kathy Ochroch (BlankRome), and Kay Patterson (VMware)

The BlankRome/VMware pro bono team provided critical mission support by hosting regional TVC National Volunteer Corps<sup>SM</sup> training events in Philadelphia and the National Capital Region; by teaming with TVC to directly serve veterans by taking on appellate cases through the Federal Pro Bono

Program and discharge upgrade cases for veterans in need; accomplishing truly significant wins; by contributing generous donations to support TVC's mission operations; and by jointly sponsoring and conducting pro bono legal clinics for veterans.

Blank Rome and VMware supported and provided legal services at multiple veterans pro bono legal clinics in the National Capital Region. As an example, BlankRome/VMware volunteer attorneys, paralegals, and legal administrative staff provided pro bono legal services at two events in the DC Armory in support of the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs; helping more than 40 veterans in need and their loved ones at these two one-day clinics. ★

THANK YOU AND CONGRATULATIONS!

**BLANKROME**  
 vmware





**2018 TVC CHAIRMAN’S AWARD** *(Organizational Leadership)*  
**Butler Weihmuller Katz Craig LLP**



*(left to right)* Ed Glabus, Lee Woodruff, Mary Ann Gilleece, Doug Berry, and John Garrafa

Throughout the years, the Butler Weihmuller Katz Craig LLP pro bono team has provided critical mission

support by furnishing logistical and outreach support for our TVC National Volunteer Corps<sup>SM</sup> training events

in Florida; by teaming with TVC to directly serve clients by taking on at least 16 appellate cases for veterans in need through the federal Pro Bono Program, accomplishing truly significant wins; and by contributing extraordinarily generous donations over time that have strengthened TVC’s capabilities and capacity. All told, Butler Weihmuller Katz Craig LLP has directly and substantially enabled TVC to advance its mission to serve veterans and their loved ones. ★

THANK YOU AND CONGRATULATIONS!



**2018 TVC CHAIRMAN’S AWARD** *(Individual Leadership)*  
**Leo P. Dombrowski, Sanchez Daniels & Hoffman LLP**



*(left to right)* Ed Glabus, Mary Ann Gilleece, Leo Dombrowski, Senator Tammy Duckworth, and Lee Woodruff

A member of our TVC National Volunteer Corps<sup>SM</sup> since 1999, Mr. Dombrowski has collaborated with The Veterans Consortium to directly serve clients by taking on 10 appellate cases

for veterans in need through the federal Pro Bono Program, accomplishing truly significant wins. Due to his diligence, dedicated service, professional legal skills and litigation prowess,

Mr. Dombrowski has achieved an unbroken win streak, attaining a 10-0 record for veterans and their loved ones. Most recently, Mr. Dombrowski took a U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims case for Mrs. Shirley Sutfin, widow of WWII veteran Charles Sutfin, who served from 1942–1945 and was a tank repairman at the Battle of the Bulge. After winning the case in federal court, Mr. Dombrowski continued his pro bono representation back at the Department of Veterans Affairs to effectuate the court’s decision, securing approximately \$195,000 in retroactive disability benefits for Mrs. Sutfin and a monthly payment going forward of more than \$1,200. All told, Mr. Dombrowski has directly and substantially enabled TVC to advance its mission to serve veterans and their loved ones. ★

THANK YOU AND CONGRATULATIONS!



## 5,000<sup>TH</sup> CASE VICTORY



(left to right) Judge William H. Webster, Linda Klein, and Judy Donegan

This was a hard-earned victory for appellant Marcus D. Garrett, a Vietnam veteran seeking justice and access to the care, benefits, and compensation he earned while serving his country in combat. Mr. Garrett was represented pro bono by a legal “dream team” from TVC’s National Volunteer Corps<sup>SM</sup> and staff on this milestone 5,000th federal Pro Bono Program case before the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC). The Honorable William

H. Webster, former Director of the FBI and the CIA, current Chair of the Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC), and retired partner at the Washington, DC offices of international law firm Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy, joined Linda Klein, Past-President of the American Bar Association (ABA) and senior managing shareholder at Baker Donelson Bearman Caldwell & Berkowitz P.C. as honorary co-counsel for The Veterans

Consortium’s milestone 5,000th federal Pro Bono Program case. Judge Webster’s and Ms. Klein’s volunteer service in this successful appeal was recognized at TVC’s 2018 Pro Bono Mission Partner Awards Reception.

Ms. Judy Donegan, The Veterans Consortium’s Director of Litigation & Case Management, was the lead counsel for this milestone case and worked closely with Judge Webster and Ms. Klein on the successful federal appeal. Ms. Donegan is a seasoned attorney whose 25-year legal career includes more than a decade representing U.S. Military veterans before the CAVC and the Department of Veterans Affairs. She has led or participated in more than 2,000 federal appellate cases before the CAVC. ★

## LARA EILHARDT, ESQ. VA Office of General Counsel



(left to right) Jim Sandman, Lara Eilhardt, and Mary Ann Gilleece

As an attorney in VA’s Office of General Counsel since 2011, Lara Eilhardt led the Department in connecting veterans with free legal services by assisting in the establishment of more than 170 free legal clinics in VA facilities nationwide.

Since serving as a Special Advisor on Veterans’ Access to Legal Services, Ms. Eilhardt has provided key guidance on VA-hosted legal services, spoken at national conferences on veterans’ legal needs, and trained hundreds of VA

providers on the value of co-locating legal services. In 2016, she founded VA’s Medical Legal Partnership (MLP) Taskforce, which has nurtured at least 27 VA MLPs at VA healthcare sites. She also serves as VA’s Pro Bono Liaison to the Inter Agency Pro Bono Working Group, establishing the first ever Pro Bono Policy in her office in 2014 to allow attorneys to volunteer their time for legal aid. In addition, she advises on veterans’ benefits law and VA accreditation.

Ms. Eilhardt graduated with Honors from the University of Virginia, and obtained her J.D. from the University of California-Berkeley School of Law, where she worked in legal clinics representing death row inmates and asylum seekers. ★

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# CASE STUDY:

## Discharge Upgrade

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I'm humble, grateful, and thankful for everything The Veterans Consortium did for me.

**A**NTHONY APONTE CAN'T HOLD back his emotional response as he talks about what it means to be called a veteran. It's a term he never thought he'd be able to associate with his name after receiving an Other Than Honorable discharge from the United States Marine Corps on October 24, 2014.

"I'm humble, grateful, and thankful for everything The Veterans Consortium (TVC) did for me," Aponte says after retelling the story of his battle to upgrade his discharge status. He appealed unsuccessfully to the Naval Discharge Review Board on his own, because he couldn't find anyone to help him or anyone to believe him. Then he found the pro bono services of TVC, where lawyers battled for him and restored his honor, dignity and eligibility for benefits. **His message to fellow veterans is, "If you can survive boot camp, you can do this - but you need help and TVC is there for you."**

Aponte, 26, was in his second year in the Marine Corps. He was a diligent

infantryman, always on time, an expert shot on the fleet antiterrorism security team. But all of that changed in an instant on November 29, 2012. He was a passenger in a Humvee, when the driver hit a dip in the road, causing them to roll 3 times and skid for 150 feet. Aponte landed on his feet, his head badly bleeding. He was discharged from the local hospital within two hours.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) symptoms began appearing with a slow onset. He overslept for the first time ever, suffered from light and sound sensitivity, headaches and was easily angered. Over the ensuing two years, Aponte visited base medical centers numerous times in Virginia, Bahrain and San Diego, seeking help for symptoms that were spiraling out of control, including nausea, vomiting, dizziness and balance issues.

His platoon began to ostracize, haze and beat him for falling behind in training. Not understanding what was

wrong, Aponte spent more time in the gym working out. It didn't help.

In addition to his health problems, Aponte was struggling with grief. He lost his roommate and best friend to suicide in October 2012, his mother in March 2013 and another fellow Marine in April 2013. Alone and depressed, he attempted to take his own life. Subsequent conduct associated with the attempt ultimately led to his Other Than Honorable discharge from the Marine Corps.

His final physical, in August 2014, stated that he was physically fit for discharge, but he convinced a second medical officer to refer him for a CT scan of his brain. It showed his brainstem was low hanging and pressing on his cervical stem. An MRI revealed leaking cervical fluid causing the intense headaches. He wisely gathered copies of all his medical files.

His transition to civilian life was rough. He was homeless before finding his way to community college where he

met Lauren Bacchetti. They forged a friendship, but it was months before Aponte revealed he didn't have a home or money for food.

"She made sure I ate every day," Aponte says of his now girlfriend. "She was the first person to believe my story."

The second person was TVC's Danica Gonzalves, who heads the Discharge Upgrade Program.

After Aponte unsuccessfully brought his case to the Naval Discharge Review Board, he knew he needed help from a lawyer. He had already had decompressive brain surgery using The Affordable Care Act insurance to help his degenerative condition. But he needed much more medical care than he could afford. He was turned down by three attorneys who specialized in military upgrades, before learning of TVC from the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center.

Aponte was so excited at the thought that someone might help him with his case that he battled a snowstorm to meet in person with TVC lawyers in Washington, DC. He came prepared including a passionately written statement about why he deserved his discharge upgrade.

After meeting with Aponte, Gonzalves' team reviewed the hundreds of pages of medical and personnel records. Aponte had already submitted his discharge upgrade application to the Board for Correction of Naval Records. The team quickly wrote a brief in support of the application and submitted all the corroborating evidence showing that his mental health condition was a significant mitigating factor in the misconduct. Due to their hard work in illustrating the nexus between his condition and his actions, they received a medical advisory opinion agreeing

with their arguments. In 2018, Aponte received a favorable decision and the discharge was upgraded to General, which allowed him to have his second brain surgery at the VA Medical Center the next year.

"It's the greatest feeling in the world to be vindicated," says Aponte, who has been accepted to several architecture schools, a career he plans to pursue in the future.

"These veterans need to be heard," Gonzalves says. "By taking time to listen, we were able to successfully advocate on Anthony's behalf. It is up to the pro bono attorneys to defend the veterans and tell their story."

Aponte stresses the importance of pro bono representation and hopes lawyers will see his story and offer their pro bono services to help someone else. "If it was not for TVC, I would have never had someone in my corner fighting for me." ★

The scene of the Humvee rollover.



# NEW FELLOWS

The Veterans Consortium began hosting two Equal Justice Works Veterans Legal Corps Fellows, **Samantha Farish** and **Nebye Kahssai**, in 2018.



**T**HE EQUAL JUSTICE WORKS/ AmeriCorps Veterans Legal Corps (VLC) brings together Fellows and law students to provide legal services to low-income and homeless veterans and their families. VLC is an AmeriCorps National program funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

During the yearlong Fellowship, **Samantha** takes on responsibilities for all aspects of case management and representation. She also supports the weekly Veterans Pro Bono Legal Clinic that serves nearly 1,000 people annually, which TVC operates through its Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP) with the District of Columbia VA Medical Center (DC VAMC).

Originally from Tennessee, Samantha is a recent graduate of The George Washington University Law School. Both of Samantha's parents served in the U.S. Navy and are veterans. During her second year of law school, Farish took a class on veterans' law that led her to an externship with The Veterans Consortium. Samantha is pleased to return to The Veterans Consortium for this Fellowship through Equal Justice Works.

As a veteran himself, **Nebye** has a special connection to those we serve. In his role, he helps advance the cause of justice for veterans by supporting our TVC Discharge Upgrade Program<sup>SM</sup>, providing pro bono representation to

veterans wrongly given Other Than Honorable Discharges due to conduct related to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or Traumatic Brain Injury. Nebye will also be assisting at a weekly Veterans Pro Bono legal clinic that TVC supports through its MLP with the Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic at Easterseals, in Silver Spring, MD.

Originally from Portland, Oregon, Nebye is a recent graduate of The George Mason University Antonin Scalia Law School. He enlisted in the U.S. Army during Operation Enduring Freedom and served for five years. While in law school, Nebye worked as a student-advisor at his law school's veterans law clinic where he had the opportunity to work on discharge upgrade issues, appeals of Board of Veterans' Appeals decisions, and other issues involving veterans and service members. Nebye is happy to have the opportunity to continue his work seeking access to justice for his fellow veterans. ★





# TVC LEGAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM<sup>SM</sup>

We operate The Veterans Consortium Legal Scholars Program<sup>SM</sup> as part of our mission to encourage and facilitate pro bono representation by law school, clinical and other appropriate programs. This effort introduces law students to the federal Veterans Pro Bono Program and exposes them to careers serving veterans and their families, caregivers and survivors.



ALEXANDER O'HARA

“Working for The Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program was the first time I truly felt justified in my decision to pursue a legal career. As a veteran myself, being able to give back and serve such an important community was invigorating, and made me glad I decided to pursue a career where I can continue to serve others.”

**School:** The George Washington University Law School

**Internship:** Discharge Upgrade Program



ELLIOT GEE

“I enjoyed my work at The Veterans Consortium as a summer law clerk and found the experience educational, inspirational and immensely valuable. Working for The Veteran’s Consortium Pro Bono Program was an amazing opportunity; I feel I can confidently apply my new legal skills to really help those who deserve it the most.”

**School:** The George Washington University Law School

**Internship:** Summer Law Clerk



JOHN ARSZULOWICZ

“The internship at the Veterans Consortium helped me better understand the needs of today’s veterans. In particular the needs of wounded veterans suffering from service-related disabilities. My internship taught me that no duty is more important than returning our thanks to those that served.”

**School:** The George Washington University Law School


**Internship:** Discharge Upgrade Program





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Without the commitment of individual attorneys, law firms, corporate legal teams and academic programs, The Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program would be hard-pressed to carry out our mission to serve veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors.


**We thank them here for devoting their time, expertise and resources to this worthy cause.**

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Rose Carmen Goldberg

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Disability Law Center  
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# 2018 TVC STAFF

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Director of  
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Staff Attorney



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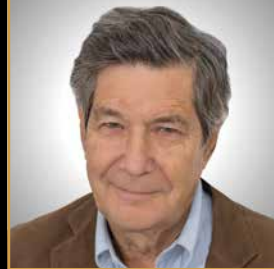
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**LEONCE WILSON**  
Veterans Law Specialist



# FINANCIALS

## STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION (AUDITED) DECEMBER 31, 2018

### ASSETS

Cash and cash equivalents	\$723,244
Investments	-
Accounts receivable	17,163
Prepaid expenses	185,915
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$926,322</b>

### LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

#### Liabilities

Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$53,291
Accrued salaries and related benefits	117,322
Deferred grant revenue - LSC	326,560
Deferred grant revenue - Equal Justice Works	8,333
Deferred rent liability	0
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>505,506</b>
<b>Net Assets - unrestricted</b>	<b>420,816</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$926,322</b>

## STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES (UNAUDITED) YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2018

### REVENUE

Legal Services Corporation - Veterans Pro Bono Program	\$2,611,487
Silver Anniversary / Pro Bono Program 25th Year	96,449
Corporate contributions	95,066
Equal Justice Works grant	62,465
Donated services	6,000
Investment income	4
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$2,871,471</b>

### EXPENSE

#### Program Services

Legal Services Corporation - Veterans Pro Bono Program	\$2,655,868
Equal Justice Works grant	76,591
Donated Funds - The Pro Bono Program	56,438
<b>Total Program Services</b>	<b>2,788,897</b>

#### Supporting Services

Silver Anniversary / Pro Bono Program 25th Year	88,110
<b>TOTAL EXPENSE</b>	<b>2,877,007</b>

#### Change in Net Assets

Net Assets - beginning of year	426,532
<b>NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR</b>	<b>\$420,816</b>

## SUMMARY OF DONATED FUNDS AND EXPENSES (UNAUDITED)

Contributions available as of 12/31/2016	243,816
Contributions received as of 12/31/2017	164,366
Interest earned 1/1/2016 - 12/31/2017	0
<b>TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS/INTEREST</b>	<b>\$408,182</b>
<b>Less</b>	
Expenses Paid from Contributions 1/1/2017 - 12/31/2017	\$196,300
<b>CONTRIBUTIONS AVAILABLE AS OF 12/31/2018</b>	<b>\$211,882</b>

## OUR REPORT CARD SINCE 1992

Success Rate	82%
Veterans Requests Handled	>45,000
Cases Placed	>5,000
Attorneys Trained	>4,000
Value of Donated Services	>\$100 M

*Your gift helps ensure veterans and their loved ones receive the care, benefits, and compensation they earned by serving our country.*

# GIVE TODAY.



# The Veterans Consortium

## PRO BONO PROGRAM<sup>®</sup>

### ONLINE VIA PAYPAL<sup>®</sup>

The safer, easier way to pay online! You may indicate in the message field at checkout if your donation is being made in memory of someone.

### DIRECT MAIL

Checks made payable to The Veterans Consortium can be mailed to 2101 L Street NW, Suite 840, Washington, DC 20037

### IN-KIND DONATIONS

Please contact via email at [outreach@vetsprobono.org](mailto:outreach@vetsprobono.org) to discuss ways that you or your firm can support our work through in-kind donations.

### CFC# DONATION

We participate in donations through the Combined Federal Campaign program. We appreciate your considering us. CFC#: 95004

All donations are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

If you would like to make a donation in memory of a veteran that has served our Country, or a volunteer attorney that has given their time to serve veterans, please contact [outreach@vetsprobono.org](mailto:outreach@vetsprobono.org).



Approved Charity

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# The Veterans Consortium

PRO BONO PROGRAM<sup>®</sup>




The Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program (TVC) is a leading national 501(c)(3) charity providing free legal services in federal venues for veterans in need.



TVC operates a global federal Veterans Pro Bono Program on behalf of the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims to represent veterans unjustly denied benefits or compensation earned from military service. Our TVC National Volunteer Corps<sup>SM</sup> attorneys also litigate cases that are appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit and the U.S. Supreme Court. Our TVC Discharge Upgrade Program<sup>SM</sup> represents Veterans before military Discharge Review Boards and Boards of Correction for Military Records.

## The Veterans Consortium

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