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*Liberty, when it
begins to take root,
is a plant of rapid
growth.*

George Washington



Northern
Kentucky
Bar
Association

MILITARY & VETERAN RESOURCES

Thomas E. Heard

The Commonwealth of Kentucky's population includes more than 330,000 veterans and 33,129 active duty military personnel. Active duty service members receive legal representation through the military, but often their civil legal needs involve a panoply of state and local legal issues such as child support, landlord-tenant, automobile

lemon law, and guardianship. Such matters require detailed knowledge of state law and local rules. The ABA is trying to assist military lawyers in plugging this knowledge gap.

ABA Military Pro Bono

The ABA Military Pro Bono Project accepts case referrals from military attorneys on behalf of junior-enlisted,

active-duty military personnel and their families with civil legal problems, and it places them with pro bono attorneys in the jurisdiction where the legal assistance is needed.



The Project is also the platform for Operation Stand-By, through which military attorneys may seek attorney-to-attorney guidance on state and local legal matters. <https://www.militaryprobono.org/>

Veterans, in contrast, receive no legal representation from the military for any civil or criminal matters and must retain private counsel or rely on volunteer programs.

Veterans Affairs

Two excellent websites with basic information are the federal veterans' affairs and Kentucky veterans' affairs websites. They provide answers and forms for navigating the benefits process. Kentucky offers the assistance of professional benefits counselors located in 16 regional offices. The Northern Kentucky office is in Florence. <http://www.va.gov/> <http://veterans.ky.gov>

Kentucky Volunteer Lawyers for Veterans

In October of 2016, the Legal Aid Network of Kentucky, which includes the Commonwealth's four legal aid programs, launched the Volunteer Lawyers for Veterans, a program that encourages Kentucky lawyers to volunteer their time and skill to help our state's low-income veterans resolve civil legal problems in the areas of consumer law, family law, government benefits, and housing. The Volunteer Lawyers for Veterans

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The Kentucky resident attorneys of Wood Herron & Evans congratulate the recipients of the 2016 Distinguished Lawyer of the Year: The Late Robert C. Hoffman, and 2016 Outstanding Volunteer of the Year: Thomas L. Rouse. We look forward to celebrating these well-deserved honors with you.



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program streamlines pro bono services for veterans in Kentucky by creating a single point of entry by which veterans across the state can access civil legal services.

Volunteer Lawyers for Veterans is accessible to veterans across the Commonwealth who cannot otherwise afford an attorney via a toll-free number. By calling 1-844-268-0838, a veteran has a single point of contact when facing unresolved civil legal issues. The veteran who calls the hotline will speak with a legal aid staff person dedicated to serving veterans who will help determine the assistance required and work at placing the veteran with an appropriate volunteer.

Attorneys interested in volunteering should email veterans@laslou.org, or they may directly reach out to their regional legal aid office. Most of the requests for assistance are the common areas of practice mentioned above. For attorneys who are interested in providing legal services with matters that pertain to Veterans Affairs, there are opportunities not only to serve veterans in this important area, but also to receive further training. Within the past year, Volunteer Lawyers for Veterans held four CLEs throughout the state to

give attorneys information on issues such as VA benefits and military discharge upgrades. Experienced VA-accredited attorneys and new attorneys to this area of practice found the CLEs to be beneficial. Send an email to the address above for more information about upcoming CLEs or other training opportunities.

The Volunteer Lawyers for Veterans Program is made possible in part through a grant provided by the Legal Services Corporation.

Veterans Treatment Court

Some of the men and women who serve in our military struggle with the transition to civilian life. The Kentucky Court of Justice launched its Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) program in 2012 to work with veterans suffering from mental health and substance abuse problems.

VTCs combine the principles used in Drug Court and Mental Health Court to help veterans achieve stable mental health and recover from addiction. The program provides court-supervised treatment as an alternative to incarceration and offers support services, including treatment for substance abuse, mental health, connection to benefits, and help with housing, employment and education.

Jefferson County opened the first VTC in the state and programs have since been implemented to assist service members in Christian, Fayette and Hardin counties. A VTC began operating as a pilot program in Northern Kentucky in April 2015.

Contact: Paul Dierig, Campbell/
Kenton County Drug Court
Program Supervisor
Kenton County Justice Center
230 Madison Ave., Second Floor
Covington, KY 41011
859-292-6643

Conclusion

Though there are an increasing number of programs offering legal assistance to veterans, there is still a tremendous need for attorneys interested in serving veterans and military families. Many in Kentucky, and throughout the country, would benefit from the help of a lawyer. Lawyers who aim to fulfill the Commonwealth's recommended 50 hour pro bono service obligation by helping those who have served our country have various opportunities to do so.

Thomas E. Heard is the Associate Director of the Chase College of Law Library, Northern Kentucky University. Tom can be reached at (859) 572-6482 or Heard@nku.edu.

**Some information was supplied by Sean Dennis of Louisville Legal Aid.*

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