



OUR NATION'S PROMISE

*A Newsletter Dedicated to the Legal Issues Facing
Veterans and Their Families*

APRIL 2013

Welcome!

What Is Our Nation's Promise?

I am excited to share this new project with you, a monthly newsletter highlighting all of the great work the [Center for Veterans Advancement](#), together with our *pro bono* partners, is doing for America's veterans. We will also be sharing opportunities for our community partners to become more involved in representing those who have served our nation. Together, we can uphold "Our Nation's Promise" to veterans and their families.

- **Rick Little**, Director, Center for Veterans Advancement at Public Counsel



'Veterans take pride in having a lawyer with them in court'

By Paul Enright, *pro bono* partner

Hunched over, my client looked nothing like the athletic paratrooper who had once served with the 82nd Airborne Division. When he came before the Court, I announced my appearance on his behalf for his traffic infraction and his Failure to Appear charge; I then immediately mentioned that my client had been honorably discharged from the United States Army, which drew an admiring glance from the bailiff.

I explained that veterans often fail to appear due to being homeless, and having other issues. I inquired if the Court would consider dismissing the Failure to Appear charge and imposing a minimal fine or community service for the underlying charge. The Court seemed unsure at first, but granted the petition after examining our thorough documentation. The client clearly appreciated what the Center for Veterans Advancement had done for him. Without counsel he would have just plead guilty, without explanation, and been heavily fined.

The veterans I've helped have all been grateful, appreciative and seem to take a certain amount of pride in knowing that they have a lawyer with them in Court. I plan on continuing to do *pro bono* work for some time.

New Attorney Gets First Win for Veteran

Traffic court win means veteran can pay rent, not court fine



Ely Grinvald

The day after Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps Legal Fellow Ely Grinvald was sworn in to the State Bar of California, he was representing a formerly homeless veteran in East Los Angeles Superior Court on a traffic ticket matter. The veteran had contacted Public Counsel's Center for Veterans Advancement two weeks before, nervous and stressed out about his upcoming court date. He had just received his first traffic ticket and he wanted to avoid a "point" on his driver's license, which would have caused his insurance rates to increase. He also did not have the money to pay the fine.

Ely is an Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps Legal Fellow, staffing, in part, the CVA-LACBA partnership. Working with former Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps Legal Fellow and current CVA attorney Nancy Wheeler, Ely researched the law and counseled the veteran about his options. At the arraignment, Ely obtained traffic school for the veteran, a significant reduction in the fine amount, and a six month extension of time to pay the fine. Thanks to Ely's and Nancy's hard work in a short period of time, the veteran can avoid an increase in his insurance rates and having to choose between paying his rent and his court fine.

For more information about how *pro bono* attorneys can assist Public Counsel clients with their basic needs, please contact David Daniels, Pro Bono Directors, at (213) 385-2977, ext. 101.



Veterans Pro Bono Project

CVA-LACBA Veterans Pro Bono Project Helps Veterans Remove Legal Barriers to Employment and Housing

Join us and help America's veterans rebuild their lives

The Los Angeles County Bar Association (LACBA), the largest metropolitan private bar association in the United States, and Public Counsel's nationally acclaimed Center for Veterans Advancement have joined forces to help "uphold our nation's promise to veterans and their families" and to stem the tide of poverty among our nation's veterans and their families.

LACBA will work with the CVA to recruit and train *pro bono* attorneys to provide free legal assistance and representation to Veterans on a range of legal matters, including family law, and ticket and warrant matters, which can become major obstacles to employment or housing stability. This joint partnership will assist veterans throughout Los Angeles County.

If you are interested in providing *pro bono* legal assistance to low-income veterans, please contact Ely Grinvald, Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps Legal Fellow at (213) 385-2977, ext. 189, or LACBA Pro Bono Coordinator, Laurie Aronoff at (213) 833-6776.

Other Opportunities to Serve

Pro bono attorneys are always welcome!

These veterans need your help now. Opportunities are open to all attorneys who are members of the California bar.

LN is a veteran who has turned his life around from struggling with substance abuse to becoming a full-time student. LN is entitled to a portion of his deceased father's estate, which would make a significant improvement to this low-income veteran's quality of life. However, his estranged brother, the named executor of the estate, has failed to take any action whatsoever to probate his late father's will. LN needs an attorney to take the lead of the probate of the estate in California, or to supervise the process.

LF is an honorably discharged veteran who received a traffic ticket for expired registration (CVC § 4000(a)(1) in January, 2001. Because he did not appear for his arraignment, there is a Failure to Appear (FTA) charge as well (CVC §40508(a)). The ticket will be heard at the Metro courthouse in downtown Los Angeles. LF is disabled and lives in the San Fernando Valley. LF would greatly appreciate pro bono assistance with resolving his ticket, as he is trying to find employment and clear his record.

Our client JR is a formerly homeless veteran who changed his life and is now helping other homeless veterans achieve stability and move forward with their lives. He recently received two tickets, one for having no registration (CVC § 4000(a)(1)) and no insurance (CVC §16028(a)), and another ticket for speeding (CVC § 22350). JR is more than willing to do community service and traffic school to resolve these tickets. Arraignments for both tickets are set for 8:30 am on July 22, 2013, at the Metro Courthouse in downtown Los Angeles.

If you are interested in helping these veterans, please contact Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps Legal Fellow Ely Grinvald at:(213) 385-2977 x 189.

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