Proskauer

Veterans Day Spotlight: Securing Benefits for Disabled Vets

Proskauer For Good Blog on **November 6, 2018**

On October 22nd, Proskauer associates Dan Nelson and Jin Joo received the New York City Bar Justice Center's 2018 Jeremy G. Epstein Award for Pro Bono Service. Since November 2017, Dan and Jin have coordinated Proskauer's involvement in the Justice Center's Veterans Assistance Project (VAP). These two are no strangers to public service. In addition to their current pro bono work, they both previously served with distinction in the military. Dan served in the U.S. Army infantry from 2000 to 2008, during which time he deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan; and Jin served in the U.S. Air Force as a communications officer for four years, and was deployed to Iraq in 2005.

Through VAP we provide veterans with legal assistance on claims for compensation from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The veterans we assist have disabilities arising from injuries sustained during their time in service, and are of limited means. These pro bono matters are important and impactful. At the firm, these are among the most popular cases to take, due to the challenging and fulfilling nature of the work. Proskauer's involvement in VAP has grown rapidly thanks in large part to a successful partnership with Bloomberg L.P.'s legal department. We have represented a total of 45 veteran clients thus far with the help of approximately 30 Bloomberg and 70 Proskauer lawyers, paralegals and staff.

As veterans ourselves, we consider this pro bono work to be a personal mission. Military service (especially during periods of conflict) can take a toll on a service member's mental and physical well-being, something we have seen personally in our friends and comrades who were injured or are suffering mentally and emotionally as a result of their service. We see it in our clients who include World War II veterans, Vietnam War veterans and more recently, the young veterans still in their twenties who are coming off of multiple 12-month deployments to Iraq and/or Afghanistan. Indeed, veterans are more than twice as likely to have a disability than non-veterans.

Approximately five million beneficiaries are being paid over $78 billion each year by the VA in a system that has been mired in what *The New York Times* described as "an unruly tower of regulations." Completing the VA claims application process and navigating the bureaucracy can be a real challenge so the assistance of counsel makes a huge difference. And there is a lot at stake: finally receiving the monthly disability compensation to which a veteran is entitled is truly an impactful, life-changing event for the veteran, and often, the VA benefit is what keeps food on the table and prevents homelessness.

Seeing firsthand the profound difference our assistance makes in our clients' lives is what keeps our volunteer lawyers coming back for more, one veteran client after another.

We are proud that Bloomberg and Proskauer have prioritized this project, and are continuing to expand the number of disabled veterans we can assist. As Veterans Day approaches, we must not forget those who have sacrificed so much in service to our country, and who are now in great need of help.

View Original