



# TEXAS LAWYERS FOR TEXAS VETERANS 2017-2018

The State Bar of Texas implemented Texas Lawyers for Texas Veterans (TLTV) in July 2010, to develop and assist pro bono legal advice clinics for military veterans and their families throughout the state. Texas has the second-highest population of veterans in the nation, and a distressing number of Texas veterans are living in poverty or without homes. As a result, some veterans don't have the resources, financial or otherwise, to seek and retain legal counsel. TLTV provides essential resources that enable local bar associations and legal aid organizations to provide brave veterans the civil legal assistance they need and deserve.

## Local Bar Associations and Legal Aid Organizations

Since the project's launch, more than **32,000** veterans have been served by more than **11,000** volunteer attorneys, paralegals, and law students through local bar association and legal aid organization veterans legal clinics in Texas. Over **1,200** veterans received limited-scope or full-scale representation from these organizations this year. The State Bar of Texas TLTV hotline receives daily calls from veterans looking for referrals to local clinics or other resources. Their legal needs vary, but many common issues include will execution, benefits issues, and family law.

*Volunteer attorney  
Ken Whitlow  
listens intently to  
the widow of a  
veteran during a  
free consultation at  
the Hardin County  
Veterans Legal  
Clinic.*



More than 25 bar associations and organizations are currently participating statewide, including: the Amarillo Area Bar Association, Austin Bar Association, Baylor Law School, Bell County Bar Association, Dallas Bar Association, Denton County Bar Association, El Paso Bar Association, Houston Bar Association, Jefferson County Bar Association, Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas, Lone Star Legal Aid, San Antonio Bar Association, and Tarrant County Bar Association.

Clinics would not be possible without committed volunteers. Attorneys across the state have dedicated thousands of hours to serve our veterans. Local universities have provided many clinics with pre-law/law students who can earn pro bono hours



*Attorney volunteers at the TLTV Tarrant County  
Chapter Clinic sponsored by Kelly Hart.*

and are mentored through the program. Local paralegal organizations provide many clinics with effective administrative volunteers as well.

Most local bars offer advice to veterans who are referred to them, no matter their income eligibility. Veterans continue to be grateful for the support and assistance they receive through the program; however, many veterans remain in need of legal assistance.

If your local bar association is interested in starting a clinic or partnering with an existing clinic, please contact the Local Bar Services Department at **(800) 204-2222, ext. 1514** or **localbars@texasbar.com**. Our department can provide resources like the Clinic in a Box or the Veterans Clinic Marketing Tool Kit that will assist you in establishing a clinic and keeping it going. The Clinic in a Box contains everything an organization needs to host a veterans legal clinic — applications, forms, office supplies, and more. The Tool Kit provides in-depth resources to organize and publicize local veterans legal clinics to potential veterans and volunteer attorneys.

## Statewide Access to Justice Efforts

The Texas Access to Justice Commission with its co-sponsor, the State Bar of Texas, honored veterans throughout the state at the 2018 Champions of Justice Gala Benefiting Veterans. More than \$404,000 was raised to help provide civil legal services to low-income Texas veterans. Proceeds are distributed by the Texas Access to Justice Foundation (TAJF) and dedicated to the provision of civil legal services for low-income Texas veterans.

Keynote speaker for the evening was the Honorable Nathan Hecht, the 27th chief justice of the Supreme Court of Texas. Chief Justice Hecht is active in the Court's efforts to assure that Texans living below the poverty level, as well as others with limited means, have access to basic civil legal services.

"Tonight celebrates two values we all treasure – one is peace: we honor those who have fought for it and who having born the battle, paid for it. Only by their sacrifice can we gather here in



*The U.S. Marine Corps Color Guard, Recruiting Station from San Antonio, stands at attention during the 2018 Champions of Justice Gala.*

a troubled world, in peace," Chief Justice Hecht imparted. "The other value is justice, which Madison called famously 'the end of government, the end of society that ever has been and ever will be pursued until it be obtained or until liberty be lost in the pursuit.' The Supreme Court of Texas proudly joins you in your mission to improve access to justice for veterans and your pledge to work for liberty and justice for all."

TAJF provides funding to 14 nonprofit organizations throughout the state that provide free legal services to veterans with civil legal matters including the denial of critical medical care, legal issues related to disabilities, family law matters, the denial of benefits, and other issues that may arise due to a veteran's absence from home during military service. In 2016, these organizations provided free legal services to more than 9,500 Texas veterans.

The Texas Access to Justice Foundation also coordinated the Texas Veterans Legal Aid Week (TVLAW), a statewide effort in honor of Veterans Day. During the week of November 6-10, 2017, legal aid programs, local bar associations, law schools, and pro bono private lawyers provided civil legal services for qualified Texas veterans in various locations throughout the state.

## Texas Young Lawyers Association

The Texas Young Lawyers Association (TYLA) produced the informative pamphlets *Resources for Veterans Seeking Help* and *Resources for Lawyers Assisting Veterans*. If you'd like to request these pamphlets, please contact the State Bar of Texas Public Information Department at [pamphlets@texasbar.com](mailto:pamphlets@texasbar.com).



## How Can You Help?

Local bar associations are always in need of volunteers for their veterans legal clinics. If you would like to volunteer at an existing clinic, please contact your local bar association directly or contact the Local Bar Services Department at **(800) 204-2222, ext. 1514** or [localbars@texasbar.com](mailto:localbars@texasbar.com). Our department will connect you with your nearest existing legal clinic. Veterans will be thankful for any level of service you can commit. For many, just getting to talk one on one with an attorney for 15 minutes can relieve a huge burden. [texasbar.com/veterans](http://texasbar.com/veterans)



*The HBA's Veterans Legal Initiative works with other local bars to provide one-on-one legal advice for veterans at VA Outpatient Clinics in counties surrounding Houston.*