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Veterans Affairs Law

Paul M. Schoenhard

ROPES & GRAY LLP, WASHINGTON, DC
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON COLLEGE OF LAW

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“With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation’s wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan — to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.”

— Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address (Mar. 4, 1865)

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Preface and Acknowledgments

Many assume that our military veterans are properly cared for, that those who have been injured in defense of our nation receive the benefits they deserve and to which they are entitled. Sadly, this assumption is often incorrect. The United States' system of veterans affairs is complex. And most veterans are left to navigate the system without the benefit of legal counsel. As a result, despite the best efforts of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the array of other players involved in the administration of veterans benefits, many veterans and their families do not receive what they need or are owed.

Although the United States' system of veterans affairs may never be able to afford complete justice to all military veterans and their families, it is my sincere hope that these materials will provide the background necessary for attorneys to work effectively within the current system and to understand the underlying policy considerations that must be factored into any effort at change.

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Editorial Notes

For ease of reading and to focus readers' attention on particularly relevant passages, the materials included in this text are, in many cases, heavily edited. Please note the following:

- (1) **Excerpting.** The omission of text is indicated in two ways. Ellipses (“...”) are used to indicate the omission of short (*i.e.*, less than a paragraph in length) segments of text. Three asterisks (“* * *”) are used to indicate the omission of larger portions (*i.e.*, entire paragraphs or entire sections) of text.
- (2) **Citations.** Citations have been omitted without indication, except where their inclusion provides necessary context or may be particularly helpful in enabling further research or understanding.
- (3) **Footnotes.** Footnotes have also been omitted, except where their inclusion provides necessary context or may be particularly helpful in enabling further research or understanding. The remaining footnotes, however, do not (in most cases) retain their original numbering.

Editorial footnotes have been added sparingly. In such circumstances, the footnote text itself appears within brackets (“[]”) and is further designated “Ed.—”.