

U.S. ATTORNEYS AND
STAFF DEDICATED

4,650+

PRO BONO HOURS TO
VETERANS WORK IN 2018

Support for Veterans

Access to Disability Benefits

For more than a decade, Kirkland has supported the National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP), a U.S. nonprofit organization that works to ensure veterans and active duty personnel receive the benefits to which they are entitled due to disabilities resulting from their military service.

The Firm's first large-scale project for the NVLSP kicked off in 2011 and involved assisting veterans in applying for Combat-Related Special Compensation, which is a monthly entitlement that allows eligible military retirees to recover some or all of their retirement pay that was offset by their U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability compensation. While that project has since concluded, Kirkland attorneys continue to support veterans pro bono through the organization's various projects.

In 2018, IP litigation associate Hannah Bedard secured two victories in cases referred by the NVLSP, both of which were appeals of decisions made by the Board of Veterans' Appeals to deny disability benefits. The cases involved a U.S. Air Force veteran suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after serving in Vietnam and a U.S. Army veteran who was exposed to Agent Orange while serving in South Korea.

"Working with the NVLSP gives young associates like me the opportunity to take the lead on a case by developing legal arguments, drafting briefs and interacting with clients," Bedard said. "Even better, these cases allow us to make a difference in the lives of people who served our country and now need help from the VA."



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HANNAH BEDARD
IP Litigation Associate

Another ongoing project, and one of the largest that Kirkland has worked on for the NVLSP, is the Military Sexual Trauma (MST) Project, which began in 2014. Kirkland co-sponsored an Equal Justice Works fellow, in partnership with Raytheon, who began a project to advocate for veterans who experienced sexual trauma while in the military.

According to the VA, one in four women and one in 100 men serving in the Armed Forces have experienced MST, which is defined as psychological trauma resulting from sexual assault or repeated, threatening sexual harassment, that occurred while serving. Because many survivors are fearful of reporting MST while in the military, they face a high hurdle when trying to obtain disability compensation from the VA for PTSD resulting from MST.

The assistance Kirkland provides to the MST Project is critical, as there is a severe shortage of legal pro bono representation available to assist these veterans. Survivors with MST-related PTSD have a better chance of success in resolving their claims if they have an effective and trained legal advocate who thoroughly reviews military, medical and personnel records and then develops the evidence needed to support their claims. Through the MST Project, the Firm took some of the very first cases of this kind and has assisted 33 clients to date.

100+ individual pro bono clients

MORE THAN 225 ATTORNEYS AND SUMMER ASSOCIATES AND 29 STAFF MEMBERS ASSISTED OVER 100 INDIVIDUAL PRO BONO CLIENTS IN 2018, IN ADDITION TO SERVING VETERANS AT LEGAL CLINICS AND PROVIDING LEGAL SERVICE TO VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS

BUILDING A COMMUNITY

In fall 2018, a group of Kirkland’s military veterans from around the U.S. held an inaugural event to meet one another, build community and talk about strategic goals. The group discussed ways for veterans to leverage their service-oriented mindsets to serve local communities, recruit law school candidates and provide pro bono representation to other veterans. The group plans to host local events and will continue to meet on a regular basis.

Restructuring associate Davion Chism helped to launch the group, drawing on her experience balancing law school with service in the U.S. Navy Reserves.

What motivated you to get involved with Kirkland’s veterans group?

I was president of Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law’s Veterans Law Association and greatly appreciated the support within and for the group. When I was recruiting, I noticed a lack of veterans groups within firms, so I was very interested when the idea of creating a veterans group at Kirkland was discussed.

The Northwestern vets group was important to my law school transition. I came to school from active duty and greatly needed the support of those who came from a similar background and understood the transition. I wanted to ensure there was support for veterans, and those affiliated with veterans, when coming to Kirkland. I also wanted to promote the importance of veterans within the Firm in terms of recruiting law students, interacting with clients and evaluating the skill sets we bring to the Firm.

How does Kirkland support veterans?

Kirkland has supported the group by organizing informal meetings to forward our goals, facilitating veterans recruiting events, and even updating its military leave policy to be inclusive and supportive of reservists and the unique role we play in balancing civilian and military life.

\$200,000+

KIRKLAND DONATED MORE THAN \$200,000 TO ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT VETERANS IN 2018

Continued Service



Nathan Mammen

Just six months after becoming an IP litigation partner at Kirkland, Nathan Mammen was called to active duty for deployment to Kuwait as a military prosecutor. With Kirkland's full support, Mammen was able to serve his country for 14 months and resume his work at the Firm without issue.

"When you're away for a year or more, you look forward to getting back to your life, and your job is an important part of that," Mammen said. "Kirkland supported me when I was gone and re-integrated me in such a way that my deployment didn't harm my career — it's hard to express how important that is."

Mammen has paid that support forward by representing veterans and their families pro bono, regularly handling benefits appeals before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.

He also represents six Coast Guard veterans in a class action that includes several hundred other veterans who served for 20 years or more before allegedly being forced into retirement, losing additional retirement benefits and higher pensions. The lawsuit shines light on an issue that affects many service members, but doesn't always draw public notice.

"There are many legal issues veterans face that don't get as much attention [as benefits cases]," Mammen said. "I'm interested in cases where we can not only help an individual client, but also make systemic improvements."

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NATHAN MAMMEN
IP Litigation Partner



Stephen Iacovo

On a daily basis, Stephen Iacovo helps large corporations deal with debt as a Kirkland restructuring associate. So it's natural that his pro bono work centers on helping veterans reduce their debts.

Iacovo — who served for four years as a Commissioned Officer in the U.S. Army — became involved in veterans debt issues in law school and currently sits on the board of the Military Assistance Project, which provides legal and financial services to service members and their families.

Much of his Kirkland pro bono work involves cases in which the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs either wrongly denies benefits or overpays benefits and demands reimbursement, leaving veterans responsible for thousands of dollars that they didn't know they owed.

These aren't headline-grabbing cases, but to a veteran struggling to pay off debt and afford basic living expenses, debt reduction is life-changing.

"Even small victories can make a big impact on these veterans' lives," Iacovo said.

His military experience helps him to connect with these clients and has also proven invaluable in his career at the Firm. "Kirkland values more than just law school GPAs," he said. "Good lawyers are leaders and effectively manage relationships, and many veterans possess those skills. Veterans also tend to be very self-driven, so coming to an entrepreneurial firm like Kirkland was very important for me."

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STEPHEN IACOVO
Restructuring Associate

