



**VETERANS**  
**LEGAL INSTITUTE**

# 2020 IMPACT ANNUAL REPORT

VetsLegal.org

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# VLI MISSION

Veterans Legal Institute® (VLI) provides pro bono legal assistance to homeless, at risk, disabled and low-income current and former service members to eradicate barriers to housing, healthcare, education, and employment and foster self-sufficiency.

“

*After I got hit by a car and was recovering, I sought out total permanent disability with the department of education to waive student loans, social security disability, and a claim for VA service-connected disabilities. (Veterans Legal Institute) helped me organize the process I needed to take to get me on the right track. VLI engaged and was there for me.*

*I want anyone interested to know that VLI is a separate entity from the VA, and they are there for anyone who is a vet. They were there for me when I felt betrayed by my own country. It's important that people know that VLI gives us hope and is there for us, even when there seems to be no hope.”*

**– Jennifer Gallego (Lewallen), U.S. Air Force Veteran**





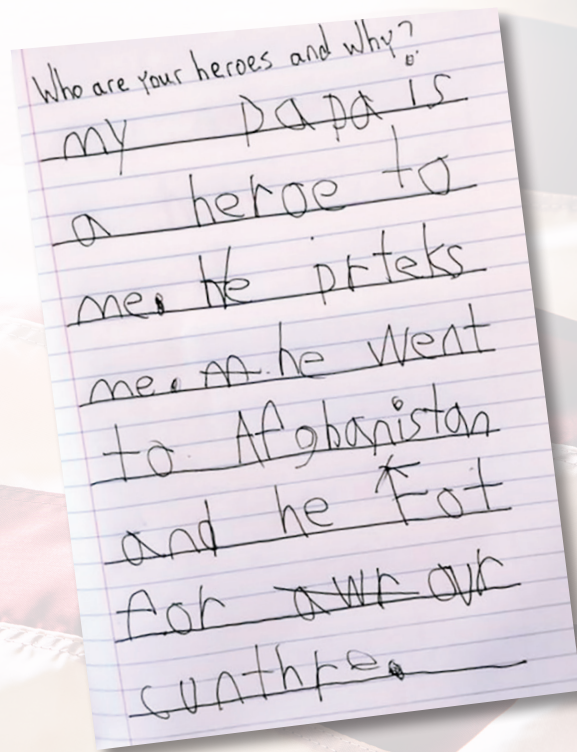
## WAYS TO SERVE AT VETERANS LEGAL INSTITUTE

- Take a case pro bono
- Volunteer in-house
- Apply to join the VLI Board
- Join the VLI's Annual Fundraising Event Committee

## WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE

- Designate Veterans Legal Institute as your charity of choice on Amazon Smile
- Become a monthly supporter and stand with our Veterans of today and tomorrow by registering at VetsLegal.org or text VLI to 44-321
- Recommend VLI receive a donation through your Donor Advised Fund (DAF)
- Consider VLI in your estate legacy planning

\*All donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law



**Let's be friends on social media!**



@VeteransLegalInstitute

@VetsLegalOC

# SPONSOR A HERO

## \$5,000

Supports onsite, free legal clinics at a local VA Hospital; this clinic serves close to 60 low-income and homeless Veterans who have medical issues.

## \$2,500

Supports a Veterans Legal Institute advocate to give onsite legal services at the Vet Center, where combat Veterans can gather and receive free mental health services each month.

## \$1,000

Supports sustaining the healthcare and standard of living of Veterans through appeals led by an attorney; these appeals secure benefits claims for illnesses and injuries including, but not limited to, post traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, and military sexual trauma.

## \$500

Supports one Legal Hero to collaborate with other nonprofits to keep one Veteran family safe and sound.



## ONGOING SUPPORTERS:





## 2014-2020

- Over **\$2.5 million** dollars in Veteran benefits and **\$500K** dollars in civil claims awarded to low-income VLI Veteran clients
- Approximately **200** lawyers and law firms have volunteered to serve the VLI mission
- The number of pro bono clinic dates has increased by **500%**, from 10 per year in 2014 to over 60 per year in 2020
- **17%** of VLI clients to date have disclosed they have no income
- Over **50%** of VLI's clientele has a household income of under \$2000 per month

Total # of Matters by Practice Area in 2020	
Veterans Benefits and Discharge Upgrades	517
Family Law	284
Housing	143
Consumer Law	108
Other (Licensing, Torts, etc.)	104
Wills, Estate, POA, Advanced Health Care Directive	99
Expungements	69
Individual Rights (including Immigration, Civil Rights)	48
Nonprofit and Small Business Assistance	34
Employment Law	22
Probate Law	10
Government Benefits, other than Veteran	3
Health	2

Total # of Matters by Income in 2020 (Regardless of Household Size)		
Zero Income	167	11%
Less than \$1,800 per month	605	41%
Less than \$2,000 per month	701	48%



**In 2020, 17 of 19 unlawful detainer cases avoided eviction and Veteran homelessness**—roughly a 90% success rate versus a 60% or lower success rate per studies for those without representation.

**In 2020, 83% of discharge upgrade decisions received by VLI were successful**—that's 3.5x higher than average rate of success. Favorable upgrades resulted in low-income Veterans restoring their dignity and ability to access safe housing, healthcare, economic and other benefits.

# THOSE WE SERVE

—  
2020  
HIGHLIGHTS

**35%**

of all cases involved complex Veteran benefit appeals or discharge upgrades related to military sexual trauma (MST), post-traumatic stress (PTS), traumatic brain injury (TBI), and other combat related trauma

**9,000+**

volunteer hours logged

**12**

clinics, multiple times per year, throughout SoCal

**35%**

of Veteran clients had dependent children

**1,472**

active matters throughout 2020, ages 20-101

**63%**

of VLI clients were Black, Indigenous, or People of color

**40%**

of VLI clients self-identified as disabled

**16%**

of Veterans served were female, while women Veterans only make up 8% of California's Veteran population

“ Now in my 70s, I have been given the greatest opportunity...and finally after serving the country I love will become a citizen of the United States. I was blessed when I was referred through VLI to a pro bono attorney who helped make my dream come true...and my heart is filled with pride, honor and continued dedication to this land I call my own.”

– A Grateful US Combat Veteran



**VETERANS  
LEGAL INSTITUTE**

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