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VETERANS LEGAL INSTITUTE HONORS FIVE LUMINARIES FOR FURTHERING ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR ORANGE COUNTY VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Honorees will be recognized at 2023 Lawyers for Warriors event and fundraiser

TUSTIN, Calif., April 18, 2023 — Veterans Legal Institute (VLI) is honoring local heroes dedicated to serving our nation's military heroes at its 2023 Lawyers for Warriors event. At this annual fundraiser, VLI will celebrate its position as one of the nation's only nonprofit public interest law firms dedicated exclusively to the legal needs of former military members and the Orange County leaders who work tirelessly to advance this mission.

"VLI's clients have demonstrated bravery and dedication to the country, protecting it at home and abroad. Many of our clients have served in combat, enduring significant physical, emotional and psychological wounds in the process," said Antoinette Naddour, co-founder and executive director, VLI. "Thanks to our supportive volunteers and community leaders, we have provided more than 10,000 veterans with pro bono legal services since our inception, and Lawyers for Warriors is our annual opportunity to recognize many of them."

The 2023 honorees join a slate of other volunteer attorneys, veteran advocates and community leaders that VLI has recognized since 2013 for honoring our nation's veterans and those who support them.

Law Firm of the Year — Co-founded in 1916 by Newton D. Baker, who served as the U.S. Secretary of War during World War I, BakerHostetler is one of the nation's largest law firms, representing clients around the globe. With offices coast to coast, the firm has more than 1,000 attorneys who litigate cases and resolve disputes that potentially threaten clients' competitiveness, navigate the laws and regulations that shape the global economy, and help clients develop and close deals that fuel their strategic growth. VLI recognizes its Costa Mesa, CA, office as Law Firm of the Year for its quality legal services to VLI clients in an effort to prevent veteran homelessness throughout Southern California.

Veteran of the Year — [Major General \(CA\) Jay M. Coggan](#) has served as the Commanding General of the California State Guard since May 2018. Before taking command of the California State Guard, General Coggan was the Commander of the State Guard's Legal Support Command and Chief Counsel Cyber Operations for the California Military Department. This Austin, Texas, resident earns VLI's designation as Veteran of the Year for his decades of service to the US military as well as the California Military Department.

Community Partner of the Year — The California Department of Veterans Affairs ([CalVet](#)) works to serve California veterans and their families. With nearly 1.6 million veterans living in the State, CalVet strives to ensure that its veterans of every era and their families get the state and federal benefits and services they have earned and deserve due to their selfless and honorable military service. CalVet earned VLI's designation because of its support of legal aid throughout the State of California.

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Attorney of the Year — Sam M. Eagle, a personal injury attorney based in Huntington Beach, California, served in Vietnam before attending law school and beginning his legal practice. In 1991, he was appointed as a Judge Pro Tem for the Westminster Traffic Court, where he served for eight years. Subsequently, in July 2010, Eagle was appointed as a Temporary Judge for the Orange County Superior Court, presiding over Traffic Court, Small Claims Court and civil settlement conference mediation. In December 2018, he retired from active legal practice but continues volunteering as a Temporary Judge for Small Claims Court and civil mediation. Eagle has been recognized with the VLI's Attorney of the Year award for his unwavering pro bono support for veterans with legal needs.

Veterans Advocate of the Year — Laguna Niguel, California, resident Kathy Dawson is CEO of [Dawson & Dawson](#) and a VLI board of directors member. A leading Certified Staffing Professional (CSP), Dawson has spent more than three decades of experience helping companies and individuals secure their next hire or job. At VLI, she has been indispensable in serving on the board for years, acting as an ambassador for the organization, assisting with employment recruitment, and hosting events to bring awareness and funding for veterans in need.

Wright Ford Young & Co. Presents 2023 Lawyers for Warriors

The 10th annual Lawyers for Warriors networking event and fundraiser returns this year on Nov. 6, 2023, to the [Lyon Air Museum](#). The signature event is part of VLI's ongoing effort to provide access to justice for Southern California veterans facing legal challenges related to their military service or civilian transition.

[Wright Ford Young & Co.](#) also returns as the presenting sponsor for the fifth consecutive year. The Irvine, Calif.-based full-service corporate accounting firm — the largest single-office CPA firm providing audit, tax and accounting services in Orange County — donates 1% of its yearly gross revenue to nonprofit causes, including VLI, for the well-being of veterans and their families.

Additional sponsorship and underwriting opportunities are available, and event tickets are available for \$150 per guest for in-person attendance and \$50 for virtual attendance. Learn more about Lawyers for Warriors and register at bit.ly/L4W2023.

About Veterans Legal Institute

Veterans Legal Institute (VLI) is a 501(c)(3) organization that provides pro bono legal assistance to low-income, homeless, disabled, and at-risk current and former service members to eradicate barriers to housing, healthcare education, and employment and foster self-sufficiency. For more information or to get involved, visit VetsLegal.org.

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