

Secretary's Forum

I am pleased to introduce the seminal issue of THE VETERANS LAW REVIEW. As part of the Department's (VA) outreach to all veterans and their families, this volume highlights legal issues and legal-policy concerns that are currently faced by the Office of General Counsel, the Veterans Benefits Administration, the Board of Veterans' Appeals and the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (Court) in their service to our men and women who have served this nation in uniform. Topics addressed in this issue include VA's duty to provide medical examinations, our duty to assist under the Veterans Claims Assistance Act of 2000, the effects of representation by attorneys in cases before VA, and the causes and effects of remands emanating from the Court. As additional foci, the REVIEW examines both the role of the new media in the delivery of veterans' benefits and how the Department is addressing undiagnosed illnesses from the first Gulf War with Iraq.

During the past year, the Department's service to our veterans in the provision of medical care, the dispensing of disability benefits, and the adjudication of claims has never been higher. Nearly 5.8 million veterans have been treated, more than \$30 billion in benefits have been dispensed, more than 800 thousand claims have been adjudicated, and more than 43 thousand appeals have been reviewed and adjudicated. In each case, the quality of service and the quality of care are a matter of pre-eminent concern to my office and to each of our Administrations and Offices.

As we move into a new Administration in 2009, the Department recommits itself to providing the very best service to each of our veterans, wherever residing and/or hospitalized. We believe this volume of the REVIEW reflects that commitment, and its carefully written articles, essays and notes will provide an exemplar of the commitment shared by every VA attorney, Veterans Law Judge and employee on behalf of this nation's veterans.

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