

Celebrating Veterans and the Seventh Amendment



Veterans Day is observed this month. I celebrate and honor my father who spent a career in the United States Army, serving two tours of duty in Vietnam and retiring as a colonel. And we, as Texas lawyers, also celebrate our country's veterans, including our colleagues who have served in the armed forces.

In fact, Texas lawyers are national leaders in service to veterans. In a report recently released by the Legal Services Corporation, or LSC, analyzing services of legal aid programs it assists nationwide, at the state level, **Texas was ranked first in the country for veteran households served**, accounting for nearly 7,000, or 17.3%, of all veteran households served by LSC grantees.¹ Well done, Texas lawyers! If you are interested in participating in this effort, check out the State Bar's **Texas Lawyers for Texas Veterans** webpage to see a list of how you can get involved on a local level.³



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State Bar President Randy Sorrels' father, Capt. Charles Sorrels, right, receiving an Army Commendation Medal from a major general while stationed at the U.S. Army Command in Frankfurt, Germany.

Recognizing what our veterans have fought for and defended is important—including the **Seventh Amendment** to the U.S. Constitution.⁴ It is one of the more straightforward amendments:

“In Suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, **the right of trial by jury shall be preserved**, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise re-examined in any Court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.”

The Seventh Amendment has two clauses. The first, known as the Preservation Clause, preserves the right to a civil jury trial. The second, known as the Re-examination Clause, prevents judges from overturning jury verdicts unless done according to certain rules.

Without question, we have seen an effort to erode or dilute the right to trial by jury over the last couple of decades. Lawyers are in the best position to speak up. As guardians of the Constitution, we as lawyers should adamantly oppose any legislation or practice that intrudes on this uniquely American right. And as to past efforts that have undermined this fundamental right, let's turn those around.

Our veterans have risked their lives fighting for our country. Let us as lawyers continue to recognize them, celebrate them, and honor them in as many ways as we can—including standing up for our Seventh Amendment.

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NOTES

1. L. Lim, J. Layton, S. Abdelhadi, D. Bernstein & R. Ahmed, *By the Numbers: The Data Underlying Legal Aid Programs*, Legal Services Corporation (2018).
2. See texasbar.com/veterans.
3. Texas has similar provisions; see TEX. CONST. art. I, § 15 and TEX. CONST. art. V, § 10.