



## MY OPINION

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# Serving Those Who Served

*As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.*

— John F. Kennedy

One of the amazing qualities of Texas lawyers is our ability to battle as adversaries but walk away as friends. We advocate zealously on behalf of our clients but extend professional courtesies to our opponents. We represent those who feel aggrieved but foster an environment of civility in which to resolve disputes. We set aside personal differences and come together to find common cause. We do these things not because they're easy or give us an advantage but because they're right.

In November 2009, the *Texas Bar Journal* celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Texas Lawyer's Creed. The Creed (which each of us should make a point of rereading regularly) encapsulates our collective duty to uphold the highest standards of ethics and professionalism. The highest gratitude we can show the Creed is not to utter its words but to live by them. As I have traveled the state this year, I have witnessed countless examples of Texas lawyers who are doing exactly that.

I have always been impressed by Texas lawyers' determination to serve those in need. This year, as we launched *Texas Lawyers for Texas Veterans*, I have been pleased by the commitment Texas lawyers have made to assisting one of our neediest populations — the brave men and women who have served in our armed forces.

With *Texas Lawyers for Texas Veterans*, we are providing pro bono assistance to military veterans and families who cannot afford basic legal services. Veterans face many hardships when they return from war. They may have family law issues, landlord/tenant disputes, or financial struggles. They may suffer from the mental and physical stresses of combat. We want to help ease their transition. We are partnering with veterans groups, mental health professionals, and government agencies to ensure that those who volunteered to defend our nation have access to the care and resources they deserve.

The *Texas Bar Journal* has dedicated this issue to highlighting some of the issues veterans face, the resources available to assist them, and the opportunities Texas lawyers have to help. I hope that you find the articles informative and inspiring.

An initiative of this scope could not succeed without the assistance of many individuals and organizations. I am especially indebted to **Dan King**, **Jo Ann Merica**, and **Travis Sales** for answering the call to lead the initiative. The Texas Young Lawyers Association, under the leadership of President **Jennifer Evans Morris**, produced two outstanding brochures that are providing guidance to veterans and the lawyers who assist them. One of the brochures is a resource guide targeted toward veterans. (You can find excerpts on p. 868.) The other brochure is a resource guide targeted toward lawyers. (See p. 848.) The State Bar staff has compiled and distributed hundreds

of legal clinic toolkits and dozens of ready-to-go clinics in a box. Local bar associations across the state have committed to the project and are conducting legal clinics in their communities.

This month we celebrate Veterans Day. It is both a somber day and a day to express gratitude. Legal clinics and other events will take place around the state. I urge you to get involved. Volunteer for a legal clinic in your area. Commit to take on a pro bono case. To learn more about when clinics and events are planned, visit [www.texasbar.com/veterans](http://www.texasbar.com/veterans).

In the 1980s, Bruce Springsteen wrote a searing anthem that chronicled the experiences of a Vietnam veteran who returned to discover that he couldn't find a job or receive his VA benefits. Unfortunately, thousands of Texas veterans find themselves in similar circumstances. They served our country in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, Iraq, and Afghanistan, among others. They need our help. As lawyers, we are in a unique position to assist them. The highest gratitude we can show them is not to utter words of appreciation but to live by them. That is the mission of *Texas Lawyers for Texas Veterans*. ❖

*Come back home to the refinery  
Hiring man says, "Son, if it was up to me"  
I go down to see the VA man  
He said, "Son, don't you understand"*

— Bruce Springsteen  
"Born in the USA"