

November, 2009 Bar News Article

By: Jim Cathcart

Recently, Scott Candoo, President-Elect of the Tacoma-Pierce County Bar Association met with Judge Linda Lee and representatives of the County Executive, the Veteran's Administration, and the Bar to discuss a *pro bono* project that would benefit many veterans who are served at the American Lake campus of the VA's Puget Sound Health Care System.

The VA representatives pointed out that they serve a large population of veterans needing vocational, mental health, and housing assistance, many of whom have legal problems which make it more difficult for the staff to provide them assistance and more difficult for them to get their lives organized and on an upward track. Judge Lee and the VA staff members asked if the Bar could be of assistance in providing legal help for these men and women who have served our country in uniform.

What was discussed was having a dedicated office space with computers at the American Lake campus staffed by volunteer attorneys from the TPCBA on the first Tuesday (6 pm to 9 pm) and the third Saturday (2 pm to 5 pm) of each month. With enough volunteers the responsibility for individual attorneys would be minimal and the impact for the patients would be very great.

It was made clear that the assistance being offered would not include representation of the veterans, but would be limited to assisting them in understanding the legal issues, drafting letters or making calls on their behalf, and ensuring that they were aware of what options for free or low-cost representation were available in the community. Ideally, even without representation the veterans would be far more able to champion their own interests after being advised by this office. The great majority of the issues would involve family law, landlord-tenant, and civil claims and judgments.

President-Elect Candoo told Judge Lee and the VA staff that he believed the TPCBA membership would support such a worthy cause and offered to notify the membership of the proposal and to seek volunteers. The number of days that service can be provided and the duration of the office hours will depend upon the number of volunteers.

Please call Randy Turner at (253) 583-1711 or email to [Randy.Turner2@va.gov](mailto:Randy.Turner2@va.gov) if you are willing to assist in this project and provide the days that you could assist and the amount of time you could offer. If you ask the men and women of the Bar who volunteer at our existing clinics you will find that they consider the time they spend there to be some of the most fulfilling hours of their practice. Please join us to provide this help to our veterans at American Lake.