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Connecticut Veterans Legal Center to Expand Veteran Law Training Materials Nationally

West Haven (March 27, 2020) – Connecticut Veterans Legal Center is a national leader in veteran law and is expanding the field by creating a series of video training sessions based on its soon to be published Discharge Upgrade Manual for veteran advocates. This project will prepare attorneys across the nation to serve veterans with pro bono legal representation in discharge upgrade petitions, legal aid organizations with competent pro bono volunteers to better serve their veteran clients. Increasing the legal community's ability to help veterans access VA health benefits and services provides life transforming impacts for veterans.

Too many servicewomen and men who protect our country return to civilian life only to find they lack access to basic care for their service injuries. An alarming number of veterans struggle with PTSD, addiction, depression, traumatic brain injury (TBI) and other invisible wounds. More than 272,000 post-9/11 veterans have received less than honorable discharges, often due to behavior that is symptomatic of service-related PTSD or traumatic brain injury, thus excluding them from life-saving services and benefits.

Lawyers across the country have heard the call to help represent veterans in discharge upgrade proceedings, a highly specialized area of veterans' law. Free, expert level, easily accessible training and support will help willing lawyers heed that call. In early 2020, Connecticut Veterans Legal Center (CVLC) completed a comprehensive Discharge Upgrade Manual. ABE funding will allow CVLC to supplement the manual with several in-depth, on-demand training videos for the legal issues in each chapter of the manual, building a national pro bono network serving low-income veterans who have been unjustly denied access to healthcare, disability benefits, and supportive services due to their military discharge status.

Without legal help, fewer than 50% of these veterans prevail; most claims are denied for procedural reasons. With less than 40 veteran legal clinics nationwide providing discharge upgrade representation, the need is significant to ensure justice for our nation's heroes.

About CVLC: Connecticut Veterans Legal Center (CVLC) helps veterans recovering from homelessness, addiction, and mental illness overcome legal barriers to stable housing, healthcare and income. Formed in 2009, CVLC was the first program in the United States to integrate legal services on-site at VA mental health facilities. Through CVLC, hundreds of volunteer attorneys across Connecticut have donated millions of dollars' worth of pro bono assistance, and helped their veteran clients achieve stability and rebuild their lives. For more information, please visit ctveteranslegal.org.

The ABE Vision is to make a difference by funding programs that advance the American justice system and the rule of law. ***Our Mission is*** to generate funds for the support of law-related public service, educational, and research programs by building and sustaining the Legal Legacy Fund and by sponsoring insurance and other programs for the legal profession that encourage charitable giving.