



CONNECTICUT
VETERANS
LEGAL
CENTER



2023-24
IMPACT
REPORT

A WORD FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear friend,

I am incredibly proud of the progress Connecticut Veterans Legal Center made as an organization in 2024. As you will see in this report, we helped more than 1,700 Veterans living across Connecticut including full representation of Veterans in 735 legal cases.

We also expanded geographically this year, opening the Captain Matthew E. Auger USNR Office in New London in January. This office is donated by Suisman Shapiro Attorneys-At-Law in honor of the late Judge Auger, who dedicated countless hours to pro bono legal representation prior to joining the bench. This office makes it easier for us to help Veterans in Eastern Connecticut—which boasts the highest per-capita Veteran population in the state—who may not have the means or ability to travel to our other offices.

Our organization also embarked on major changes to drive us forward. First—over the course of the year—Kevin Lenehan mentored Margaret Donovan as she succeeded him in the critical role of Board Chair. I personally want to thank Kevin for all he has done for CVLC and for his continued leadership as an Emeritus member of our Board. Thank you also to Margaret, who is a brilliant and dedicated leader.

Second, working with a team of staff and Board members, CVLC refined our mission and vision to reflect the totality of what makes our organization special. This was a part of our Five-Year Strategic Plan process, which was finalized in September 2024.

Our growth was made possible thanks to the incredible staff and with the support of the Board of Directors and supporters like you. Thank you for all you do, and I look forward to continuing to work with you all until every Veteran in Connecticut has what they need to live with dignity and peace.

Very respectfully,



ALISON M. WEIR

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

LT. COL., US AIR FORCE (RET.)

OUR MISSION

Our mission to empower, support, and improve the lives of Connecticut Veterans by providing free legal assistance to help them overcome legal barriers to housing, healthcare, income, and recovery.

OUR VISION

Our vision is for all Connecticut Veterans to thrive and contribute to their communities with a sense of self-worth and dignity.

Learn more about our work at
CTVeteransLegal.org

Photo of Alison Weir by Studio DUDA.

COVER PHOTO: CVLC current and former Clients. Photos by Desirea Stott-Rodgers and David Apuzzo.

WELCOMING NEW LEADERSHIP

MARGARET DONOVAN BECOMES CHAIR OF CVLC'S BOARD



“CVLC has grown to be the premiere Veteran-centric legal services provider in the country and I look forward to continuing to support CVLC, Margaret, and Alison in the future.”

- Kevin Lenahan, CVLC Past Chair of the Board

Kevin Lenahan has led the organization through a period of enormous growth, bringing the organization through COVID-19 and other challenges while stewarding it to its current status as a nationally recognized legal aid organization.

In May of 2024, the Board of Directors unanimously elected Margaret Donovan to succeed Kevin as Board Chair. Kevin will remain on the Board as an active Director. Margaret will lead the organization in partnership with Executive Director Alison Weir to realize the goals set forth in the Strategic Plan and realize our vision that every Veteran has what they need to live with dignity.

Learn more about CVLC's Board of Directors at ctveteranslegal.org/board

BUILDING STRONGER FUTURE

CVLC'S KICKS OFF A NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

Connecticut Veterans Legal Center's Strategic Plan for 2024 – 2029 is a follow-up to the preceding strategic plan, taking into account successes, short-comings, and new challenges and opportunities. The Plan was developed in concert with Executive Director Alison Weir, CVLC's Board of Directors, and a staff working group, collaborating over the course of more than a year.

Key to our plan development, was the support of Constance Royster, who led us in the initial stages and provided much-needed expertise. Special thank you to the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven for providing funding to underwrite this process.

To read the full Strategic Plan for 2024 – 2029, please visit ctveteranslegal.org/strategicplan.



(top) Photo of Kevin Lenahan by Judy Sirota Rosenthal.

(left to right) Kevin Lenahan, Alison M. Weir, and Margaret Donovan at CVLC's fall salon celebration. Photo by staff photographer.

STRATEGIC PLAN PROCESS TIMELINE

JANUARY 28, 2023

CVLC Board of Directors meets for a facilitated board retreat to refine and strengthen ways in which they contribute to CVLC, and discuss creating a new 5-year strategic plan.



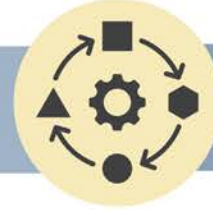
JULY - SEPTEMBER 2023

Board and staff review of the existing strategic plan to evaluate current organization needs, previous set forth plans, and review if goals from that plan were met.



OCTOBER 18, 2023

Strategic Planning Committee, which is made up of both staff and board members and chaired by Kevin M. Lenehan, meets for the first time.



FEBRUARY - AUGUST 2024

The Strategic Planning Committee splits into small working groups to draft objectives for each of the four 2024 - 2029 Strategic Plan goals. Working in these small groups they create an outline for the plan.



JANUARY 8, 2024

CVLC's full Board of Directors meets and unanimously approves CVLC's updated mission and vision statements and list of goals.



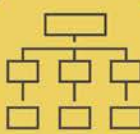
JANUARY 6, 2024

The Strategic Planning Committee meets with facilitator and revises CVLC's mission, updates CVLC's vision statement, and sets the overarching goals of the 2024 - 2029 Strategic Plan.



AUGUST 6, 2024

Strategic Planning Committee meets to finalize the draft of the full plan for presentation to the Board of Directors. Committee asks CVLC's Executive Director Alison Weir to develop the final draft of the 2024 - 2029 Strategic Plan for board review.



SEPTEMBER 25, 2024

The 2024 - 2029 Strategic Plan is presented to CVLC's Board of Directors at the September 24th meeting and unanimously approved, via electronic vote, the following day.



IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2024 - 2029 STRATEGIC PLAN

CLVC'S IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

Connecticut Veterans Legal Center was proud to help **more than 1,700 Veterans** in Connecticut during the 2023-24 fiscal year by providing full representation, through pro bono partnership referral, giving advice & counsel, high-quality referrals, and non-legal guidance and social service referrals.

We faithfully track and analyze information about our clients and outcomes to ensure we meet our goals with the support of **Alex McCulloch**, Data Analyst.

The blue stars represent the number of Veterans served by county.



CVLC SERVED MORE THAN 1,700 VETERANS IN THE LAST YEAR

OUR CLIENTS

40%

experienced homelessness

60%

live with a disability

FINANCIAL AWARDS FOR OUR CLIENTS

\$1.4MM

In lump sum awards to Veterans and their families

\$17.7MM

In anticipated lifetime income from VA income benefits

LEGAL CASE BY TYPE



47% VA Benefits

32% Housing Related

9% Discharge Upgrades

6% Probate, Taxes, Financial

6% Other Civil Legal Issues

CONNECTICUT
VETERANS
LEGAL
CENTER



All data is based on our client and case data, beginning July 1, 2023 and ending on June 30, 2024.

FINANCIAL REPORT

STEWARDING YOUR SUPPORT RESPONSIBLY

EXPENSES BY TYPE

2023-24 FISCAL YEAR



- 73% Programming
- 16% Administrative
- 9% Fundraising
- 2% Marketing

INCOME BY TYPE

2023-24 FISCAL YEAR



- 57% Government Grants
- 28% Foundation Grants
- 7% Special Events*
- 5% Individual Giving
- 2% Corporate Support
- 1% Earned Income

Connecticut Veterans Legal Center is in excellent financial standing, thanks to strong oversight by the Board of Directors and an excellent professional team. In an effort to ensure our long-term stability and aligned with our Strategic Plan (2024-2029), CVLC is successfully working to diversify funding through increased private support. A list of supporters for FY2024 can be found on the following pages.

We conduct an annual audit each year under the oversight of the Board of Directors. Connecticut Veterans Legal Center's independent auditor is **Whittlesey** for the 2023-24 fiscal year. Audited financial statements are available to view online at ctveteranslegal.org/ourimpact.

**Special events fundraising is based on the net income from CVLC's fundraisers, Saluting Service and The Ride for Our Vets.*

PHOTO: CVLC Executive Director Alison Weir with CVLC former client Sue K. Photo by David Apuzzo.



10 YEARS OF MAKING A DIFFERENCE

ATTORNEYS DARREN PRUSLOW AND MARY-CHRISTY FISHER

On Christy Fisher's and Darren Pruslow's first day, Connecticut Veterans Legal Center was still in its infancy. It was February 2014, and the entire staff was operating out of a small room at the Errera Center.

Their journey hasn't always been easy. When they inherited a caseload from a staff member who was leaving during the early years, Darren and Christy split an entire caseload from the front to back of the alphabet. *"It was a little bit of soup to nuts, as far as the legal issues,"* Christy tells.

Over the years, Christy and Darren have witnessed significant changes in the landscape of legal services and the challenges faced by their clients.

They emphasize the need for holistic, integrated solutions as CVLC expands its services. Noting

that acquiring Veterans benefits is often only the first step to helping Veterans feel safe and supported, Darren states it plainly: *"Holistic solutions sometimes require more than just money."*

Christy reflects on Connecticut Veterans Legal Center's growth: *"When I first started we were hunting for places to interview clients. The program has expanded far beyond anything I ever expected."*

Read more about Darren and Christy's story at ctveteranslegal.org/darrenandchristy.



PHOTO: CVLC Senior Counsel Mary-Christy Fisher (left) and Supervising Attorney Darren Pruslow at the Community Resource and Referral Center in West Haven. Photo by David Apuzzo.

BUILDING STRONGER FUTURE

ADVOCATING FOR VETERANS RIGHTS AND BENEFITS STATEWIDE

CVLC recognizes that systemic problems require systemic solutions, including changes in our legislation that will prevent some of the issues our clients see.

This year, members of our team worked to advocate for tenant rights and for expanded benefits for Veterans who call Connecticut home. We thank our friends at the state legislature, especially those in the Veterans and Military Affairs Commission, for welcoming our comments even when we disagreed on the outcomes.

WIN: Public Act 24-46, An Act Establishing a Property Tax Exemption for Veterans Who Have a Service-Connected Permanent and Total Disability Rating

You can explore all of CVLC's advocacy work, including reading testimony by Executive Director Alison Weir and other staff and board, by visiting the CVLC blog located at ctveteranslegal.org. If you click the most recent post, you can then sort by category. Select category "Advocacy" to pull up all of our recent work.



THE RIDE FOR OUR VETS

Since 2012, the Ride for Our Vets has taken Riders across Connecticut, with routes that have explored everywhere from the rural bike trails to the beauty of the coastline—raising over \$1 million in the last decade to provide free legal services to low-income Veterans throughout our state.

The Ride for Our Vets was back in-person for a full ride for the first time in 5 years in 2024. We had more than 100 Riders join us at Veterans Memorial Park in Norwalk and **raised nearly \$140,000!**

We would like to extend a special thank you to all of our sponsors, particularly our producing sponsor **Point72** whose leadership support and participation in our planning committee make the Ride for Our Vets possible.

Learn about the Ride for Our vets at ctveteranslegal.org/theride.

Ride for Our Vets 2024 photos by Joel Callaway.



THANK YOU!

TO ALL OUR DONORS WHO UNDERWRITE OUR WORK AND SUPPORT OUR MISSION

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

Steve and Debbie Abrams
Charles Acquisto
Samuel Adelman
Melinda Agsten
George Akre
Spencer Alstodt
Gretchen Ammon
William and Nancy Anderson
Bruce C Angeli
Jamie Ann
Anonymous (14)
Amy Antioho
Mary Antonetti
Thomas and Danielle Armas
Laura Ashcroft
David Atkins
Jeanine Avitabile
Ian Ayres
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Gailey and Lynn Best
Matthew Blumenthal
Dana Lynne Bogacz
John Bozzi and Dr. Catherine Arnold
Francis and Mary Brady
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Liam Brennan
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Zaporah James

CAPTAIN CELINE A. FINN LEGACY SOCIETY

SECURING THE FUTURE OF CONNECTICUT VETERANS LEGAL CENTER

Planned giving is a way to make the Connecticut Veterans Legal Center a part of your lasting legacy.

In 2022, we were humbled to establish our Legacy Society with the receipt of our first planned gift from the estate of **US Navy Captain Celine A. Finn**. She was an member of the Navy Nurse Corps for 28 years, serving with devotion and great skill. She was well loved by family, friends, and her fellow sailors. When she passed, we were honored to be among the beneficiaries of her estate and thankful for her family's support.

Want to talk to CVLC about your legacy gift? Contact Shannon Mykins at smykins@ctveteranslegal.org.

Richard Jarbeau
 Allan Jay
 Sabrina Jeffers
 Adam Jeniski
 Jeffrey Jenkins
 Dominique Johnson
 and Billie Gastic Rosado
 Lynn Jones
 Ari Jonisch
 Marc Kalt
 Michael Kaplan and Susan Sawyer
 Joette Katz+
 Daniel Kazup
 Teddy Keller
 Kelley Family Fund / John Kelley
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 Nicola H Kelsey
 Katrice Kemble
 Liz Kennard
 Brian Kennedy
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 Kurt Koschnitzke
 Susan Kulp
 Andrew Kwatinetz
 Doug Kysar and Christine Kim
 Leanne LaFrance
 Matthew LaFrance
 Bj Lambert
 Paula Lapkin
 Tiffany Lau
 Jack Lavalette
 Justin Leibowitz
 John Lenehan
 Diana Lenkowsky
 Gayle, Carol, and Tom
 Lawton Leung
 James Levi
 Adam Lewis
 Christina Lindstrom
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 Gary Ljungquist
 Bill Llewellyn
 Judy and Joe Mackay
 Elpidio Madeloso+
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 The Margolis Family
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 Patrick McCabe
 Jennifer McTiernan
 and Thor Matthiasson
 David and Barbara Meagher
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 Nancy Melocowsky
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 Steve Metalios
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 Daniel Miller
 James Miron

Marcelo Modica
 Mike Monaco
 Matt Morgan
 Natalie Morgan
 Robert Moser
 Julian & Dawn Muñoz
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 Shannon Mykins+
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 Kerry Nastri
 Kathleen Nastri
 Michael Neault
 Douglas NeJaime
 Brian Nekoloff
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 Don Parrott
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 Sarah Poriss
 Theodore Prema
 John Prins
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 Eva Puorro
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 Andrew Rapport
 Megan Reichelt
 John Rice
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 Darlene Roche
 James Roche
 Jeffre Roche
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 Zuleymie Rodriguez
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 Janice Wolf and Adam Lehman
 Wyot Woods
 David Yaccarino
 Nathaniel and Mary Yordon
 Robert Zambrano
 Benjamin Zelermyer, Esq.
 Tianming Zhu and Peilan Zhou

+ Makes a monthly contribution

IN HONOR AND MEMORY

In honor of the Veterans in my family

Paulette Greene
Carolyn W. Kaas

In memory of Marine Christiana Alkire

Juliet and Marvin Taylor

In memory of Edward Anderson

Patricia Brown

In memory of Peter Antioho

Amy and Mark Antioho
David Lavorgna

In memory of Scott Banks

John Byrne
Jamie Scrimgeour

In honor of LTC Richard Allen Beach

Joan Beach

In memory of Harold Beardsley

Leah Landro

In memory of Wesley Belfi

Lizzie Belfi

In memory of John Beecher Bennett

Elizabeth Bennett

In memory of Carol Bronz

Gary Bronz

In memory of Lt Col Timothy P. Brooks

Meghan Brooks
Sheila Brooks
John Byrne
Mark Hughes
Jamie Scrimgeour
Jim and Chrissy Scrimgeour
Stephen Toman and Heather Smith
Victoria Wenger

In memory of John Cabral

Donn Cabral

In memory of Kevin Cahill

Melanie McKenna

In honor of Jameson Charest

Denis Charest

In memory of Richard Coady, Sr.

Billie Cohen

In memory of Richard Coady, Jr.

Billie Cohen

In honor of the staff of

Connecticut Veterans Legal Center
Ashleigh Backman

In honor of Meara Daigle-Lindstrom

Christina Lindstrom

In memory of Thomas Daley

Patricia Brown

In honor of Margaret Donovan

Ashleigh Backman

In honor of Dog Tags Construction LLC

Jane Grossman

In honor of Mary-Christy Fisher

Harold H. Koh

In memory of William E. Fisher, Jr.

Mary-Christy Fisher and Harold H. Koh

In memory of Alfred Gatti

Patricia Suski

In memory of Mario Joseph Gatti

Ellen and Howard
Nancy Pope
Patricia Suski

In honor of Morgan Gray

Louise Manzi-Deptula

In honor of Abram Heisler

Robert Hollander

In honor of Lucian J. Jachimowicz

Jonathan Field, Esq.

In memory of Frank Kelly

Sean Kelly

In honor of Tiffany Lau

Anonymous

In honor of Kevin Lenehan

Sandra Lee Fenske

In honor of Catalina Martinez

James Roche

In memory of Robert Meier

Arlene Meier
Mark Meier

In memory of James Vincent Minor III

Ann Trambert

In honor of Conley Monk

Steven and Amy Eppler-Epstein

In memory of Joseph G. Murace, USN

Anthony Febles

In honor of Jared Nevins

Alexandra Nevins Nordland

In memory of Tim Olsem

James Costa

In memory of Richard V. Pagani

Rhonda Day

In memory of Marty Payson

Jacqueline Jaeger

In memory of Robert Ellis Perry

Holly LaFrance
The Berlin LaFrances

In honor of Pasquale Petrone, Sr.

Pasquale Petrone

In honor of William Petrone

Pasquale Petrone

In honor of Stephen Petrone

Pasquale Petrone

In honor of Karl Barrett Pieper

Edward Francis
Maryann Trocchio

In memory of Sharon Pope

Patricia Suski

In memory of James Savo

Dyann Vissicchio

In honor of Nick Savona

Aniela Savona

In memory of Captain Robert Scheetz

Josh Cleveland

In memory of Howard "Red" Sonneborn

Leah Landro

In memory of SSG Nate Turner

Marcia Turner

In memory of Howard Udell

Rick and Alisa Altabef
Ashleigh Backman
Fern Fergus
Michael and Lois Friedman
Kenneth Jacobs
Jacqueline Jaeger
Mara and Neil Miller
Berton Taffet
Andrew Udell
Judith Udell

In honor of Jeffrey Udell

Jason Peligri
and Pamela Strauss Peligri
Jenny and Adrian Schwartz
Howard and Linda Strauss

In honor of Jon Van Allen

Kristine Nadvornik-Moulard

In memory of Kelly Versteeg

Richard K Gorman

In honor of Alison Weir

Anonymous
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Deb Cluff
Mary Cristler
Amos Friedland
Komla Matrevi

In memory of Marla Weizner

Jacqueline Jaeger

In memory of Larry O. Westman

Whitney Westman

In memory of Joseph White

Jeffrey and Lucy Udell

In honor of Yale School of Management Students

Anonymous

In honor of Donald Zades

Patricia Brown

GRANTS AND CONTRACTS

AARP Foundation
Agency on Aging North Central Connecticut
Agency on Aging of South Central Connecticut
Anonymous Family Foundation (2)
Bob Woodruff Foundation
Columbus House New Haven
Community Foundation for Greater New Haven
Community Renewal Team, Inc.
Connecticut Bar Foundation
Connecticut Fair Housing Center
Ensworth Charitable Foundation
ES Veterans Association, Inc.
Fairfield County Community Foundation
Frank Loomis Palmer Fund
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Liberty Bank Foundation
NewAlliance Foundation
The Right to Counsel Program, administered by Connecticut Bar Foundation
The WorkPlace
Town Fair Tire Foundation
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
William and Alice Mortensen Foundation

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Black Hog Brewing Company
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Bristol Blues
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Circle Care Center
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Connecticut Sun
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Finn, Dixon, & Herling LLP
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Gaylord Sports Association

George W. Crawford Black Bar Association
GLMX
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Goldman Sachs Group, Inc.
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Greater Bridgeport Detachment #654
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M&T Bank
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Matney Law, LLC
McCarter & English
Morgan Stanley & CO. Inc.
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National Veterans Council for Legal Redress
National Veterans Legal Services Program
New Haven Symphony Orchestra
Pfizer*

Piper Sandler & Co
Point72*
Pullman and Comley
Reed Wilson Case Foundation
Reid & Reige Foundation
Raytheon Technologies*
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TD Securities
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UnitedHealth Group*
University of Connecticut School of Law
Voya Financial*
Walden Macht & Haran LLP
Wiggin and Dana LLP
Win Waste Innovations
WSHU Public Radio
The Yale Law Veterans Association
Yankwitt LLP

* Matched an employee contribution.

Listed in alphabetical order. This list is reflective of our FY23-24 fiscal year, July 2023 - June 2024.

SALUTING SERVICE

The 14th Annual Saluting Service was hosted at the historic New Haven Lawn Club where we honored the incredible work of **Jason DeViva**, **Cindy Johnson**, and **Minority Veterans of America**. Other speakers included Secretary of State **Stephanie Thomas**, Brigadier General and CT Commissioner **Ronald P. Welch**, and World War II Veteran **Stew Lahey**.

Learn more about Saluting Service at ctveteranslegal.org/salutingservice





“They’re changing lives, they are **literally** changing lives.”
- Amy Antioho, CVLC Board Member and Former CVLC Client

PHOTO: CVLC Director of Pro Bono Services Don Tutson with CVLC Board Member and former client Amy Antioho at the VA Community Resource and Referral Center. Photo by David Apuzzo.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Board Leadership

Kevin Lenehan, *Board Chair*
Kathleen Tourjee, *Board Secretary*
Brian Pierne, *Board Treasurer*
Margaret Donovan, *Chair Elect*

Advisory Board

Richard Blumenthal
Kevin P. Brown
Laurie Harkness
Professor Michael Wishnie

Board Members

Amy Antioho
Mike Cabrey
Joseph J. Cherico
Paul Greatsinger
Brian Hughes
Daniel Kazup

Komla Matrevi
William J. Pieper
John Rios
Kevin Sanders
Jeffrey Udell
Kiana Makris, *Board Fellow*

LEADERSHIP AND STAFF

Staff Leadership

Alison M. Weir
Felix Chaoulideer
Chelsea Donaldson
Karen Gargamelli-McCreight
Shannon Mykins
Alden Pinkham
Darren Pruslow
Donald P. Tutson, Jr.

Attorneys and Support Staff

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Whendi Cook
Patrick J Dunn
Sharon Fialkovich
Christy Fisher
Jordan Lownsdale
Alex McCulloch
Tucker McWeeny

Brendan Murphy
Cyd Oppenheimer
Eva Puorro
Cesar Rivera
Juliet Taylor
Ali Walker-Burr
Vanesha Warden
Janice Wolf

Above lists are as of the end of the 2023-24 fiscal year, June 30, 2024. In addition to the staff and board listed above, during the year our staff included Devin Brown, Peter DeSimone, Cara Cancelmo, Shannon Carter, Brianna Jarvis, Peter Katona, Nikki Kelsey, and Typhanae Williams, and our board included Thomas M. Armas and Tiffany Lau. While they are no longer directly affiliated, their contributions during the 2023-24 fiscal year were tremendous.

To see the most current staff and board lists and read their bios, please visit ctveteranslegal.org.

Connecticut Veterans Legal Center

West Haven

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West Haven, CT 06516

Orange

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Newington

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