

LAWYER

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ABOUT THE COVER



For this issue, we are highlighting a courthouse on our cover that will soon rise in St. Petersburg — the Bernie McCabe Courthouse, which will be the new home of the Second District Court of Appeal. The Second District Court of Appeal hears appeals of circuit and county court decisions from three of Florida's twenty judicial circuits in the Greater Tampa Bay area, representing nearly four million people. The circuits include the Sixth Judicial Circuit (Pinellas and Pasco counties), the Twelfth Judicial Circuit (Manatee, Sarasota, and DeSoto counties), and The Thirteenth Judicial Circuit (Hillsborough County).

The 2021 legislative session produced the approval and funding to build a new courthouse for the Second DCA in Pinellas County, The Bernie McCabe Courthouse, which is named for the late, longtime, and distinguished State Attorney for the Sixth Judicial Circuit. The Courthouse is in the final stages and the site and foundation work is beginning. Visit the Second DCA website for more information: <https://2dca.flcourts.gov/>. (Thank you to the Second DCA for providing this image.)

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OUR NATION'S VETERANS: WHO ARE THEY AND WHAT WE CAN DO TO HELP THEM

Military & Veterans Affairs Committee

Chairs: Robert Barton — Rumberger/Kirk & Steve Collins — Law Office of Rory Weiner



This article serves as an overview of our nation's veteran population in order to better serve them.



This article serves as an overview of our nation's veteran population in order to better serve them. To accomplish this, it is important to understand who is considered a veteran, the composition of our veteran population, and their needs.

Under Title 38 of the Code of Federal Regulations, a veteran is defined as “a person who served in the active military, naval, air, or space service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable.”¹ Veterans come from one of the six branches of the military — the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Space Force. They serve as part of active duty, reserve, and/or National Guard forces and are afforded different benefits based on the character of their military service.

The majority of veteran benefits today are derived from the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, or G.I. Bill, which was enacted to help the 12.1 million World War II veterans returning home. The G.I. Bill provided veterans with low-cost mortgages, business loans, unemployment benefits, and tuition assistance for college and vocational schools.

These benefits, coupled with a government veteran health care

system, continue to provide a critical platform to assist veterans returning from America's wars with their transition to civilian life and with their medical care.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are approximately 16.1 million veterans in the U.S. today.² Within this population exist several groups, each unique based on their period of service.

The first group consists of our aging WWII, Korean War, and Vietnam War-era veterans. Many were drafted in their youth, fought overseas under extreme hardships, and returned home needing assistance to transition back to civilian life. They comprise almost 60% of America's veteran population today — almost 9 million veterans.³ Many are in their late-60's to 90's and need assistance regarding long-term medical care, disability benefits, housing, estate planning, survivor benefits and elder law.

The other group of veterans, almost 7 million, consists of those who served during the period between the First Gulf War (1990-91) through the War on Terrorism (2001-2021) — America's longest conflict.⁴ Approximately 3.7 million veterans served in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere after the 9/11 attacks.⁵ These newer veterans, many in their late-30's and 40's,

have a variety of different legal needs from assistance with filing disability claims and post-9/11 education benefits with the Department of Veterans Affairs, to seeking employment and housing assistance. Unfortunately, many are unaware of the benefits for which they qualify and need assistance navigating the bureaucracy and laws to obtain them.

In summary, this is our veteran population today, and they could use our legal help. ■

¹ 38 U.S.C.S. § 101; *see also Paulson v. Brown*, 7 Vet. App. 466 (U.S. 1995).

² Fact Sheet, America's Wars. [Washington D.C.] Office of Public Affairs, Department of Veterans Affairs, November, 2020.

³ Vespa, Jonathan E. *Those Who Served: America's Veterans From World War II to the War On Terror*. [Washington, D.C.]: U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, 2020, vol. 43, Table 1, p. 2.

⁴ *Id.* Table 2, p. 8.

⁵ *Id.*



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