

Maryland State Bar Association
MILITARY LAW COMMITTEE

Eight Committee Meeting
April 1, 2009 6:00 PM
520 W. Fayette St Baltimore, MD 21201

MINUTES

I. Membership update

- A. Increased recruitment efforts needed to keep the group going as enrollment has plateaued recently.
 - 1. After the meeting, committee member Andrew Gross reaching out to UB through the Student Bar Association and the Military Law Seminar.
- B. Present members suggested efforts to advertise upcoming events.

II. New topics and events.

- A. Committee member Thomas Barnard is willing to develop fact sheets on different areas of military law to open-up discussions via email or during meetings. For example, one area of interest may be people interested in doing criminal defense at court-martials, as soldiers are allowed to hire civilian attorneys, or in challenging security clearance matters. This proposal was very well received.
- B. Members present at the meeting expressed interest in incorporating substantive topics into monthly meetings as other sections do. By focusing on legal topics that cross into other sections, the Committee can attract more members from other groups.
- C. Along those lines, developing a compendium of important decisions during the past year that affect military or veterans law could be developed and presented at MSBA's annual event or the Committee own annual event.
- D. Justin discussed possible Mil. Law Comm. annual event akin to the other sections' institutes and other all day programs. The event would address various topics in addition to traditional military law issues such as family, employment and property law, and the SCRA. He discussed working with MICPEL. Members present noted this could be done independently. To move forward, a planning subcommittee should be formed to develop an agenda, recruit speakers, and direct advertising efforts.
- E. Upcoming events were discussed.
 - 1. Veterans conference April 17th at the University of Maryland School of Law addressing Veterans issues.
 - 2. April 21 "USERRA, What Really Matters in Protecting Our Servicemembers' Employment Rights" at the University of Baltimore School of Law

3. In May will have the Honorable Congressman Frank Kratovil speaking about his work on military issues. His talk will also culminate with our Annual Awards presentation. Venue will be Baltimore County. Light reception to follow presentations.
 1. Members suggested approaching Aberdeen to join their annual law day event on May 1. Suggestion passed to Charles who is coordinating the event.
 4. The committee's program for MSBA's annual event, "Military Litigants and Witnesses in Civilian Courts: Challenges for the Bench, Bar, and Deployed Military Member," chaired by committee members Melissa A. Kucinski, Esq. and Hon. Pamila J. Brown will be from 11-1 Friday, June 12, 2009.
- F. Finally, it was suggested the Committee focus on fun social events to attract new members and facilitate interaction among current members.
1. During Justin's post-meeting update with Charles, he suggested organizing a Navy football game. They play Air Force on Oct. 3. See <http://www.navysports.com/sports/m-footbl/sched/navy-m-footbl-sched.html>. Single-game tickets on sale to General Public on June 2. Please inform Justin if interested in attending a game.

III. Legal Assistance

- A. Justin made contact with the American Bar Association's Military Pro Bono Project, which connects active-duty military personnel to free legal assistance for civil legal issues beyond the scope of services provided by a military legal assistance office via a web portal at www.militaryprobono.org. Supporting this project would compliment the Committee's existing veterans benefits program.
- B. Present members expressed concern about exclusive focus on pro bono opportunities because these cases (particularly within family law arena where a lot arise) involve substantial efforts. Suggestion to recommend option of "low bono" assistance
- C. Next steps: establish contact with MDF, Baltimore City referral service, local bar associations and follow up with ABA re: "low bono."

IV. Legislative Update

- A. No new action on the National Guard Mobilization (SB501) proposal, likely dead issue.
- B. Resolution 114 from the ABA house of delegate adopted on February 16, 2009, responding to a recent decision in federal court holding that because the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) did not specifically mention an individual right to sue, an individual servicemember could not seek relief under the SCRA. Calls for an amendment to include an individual right to sue in the SCRA. Support moving forward on this. Committee member Thomas Barnard previously suggested presenting a preview to our lawmakers and remaining involved as this moves forward. A draft will be shared with MSBA and its lobbyist first.

V. Adjourned Meeting

- A. May date for next event not set in light of possible Congressman Kratovil
May 1 event

One subject is the veteran's court that was discussed briefly in the last few meetings. In addition, legislation affecting veterans and the military was another topic.

Next, we talked about pro bono projects involving civil actions. It was discussed that these would be limited to active duty personnel. Civil actions involving retired members of the military is a subject that should be discussed in the future here.