

**PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA
LEGAL WRITING COMPETITION
2007- 08**

Entries should address the topic:

Should Congress Maintain, Modify, or Completely Redesign the Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits Adjudication Process, and How Would the Result Improve the Current System?

The Department of Veterans Affairs is the second largest agency in the federal government; only the Department of Defense is larger. Millions of veterans rely on VA for health care and for compensation for disabilities that resulted from their military service. The current VA claims system had its origins in the 1920s, and many of the criteria used to rate veterans' disabilities today were last updated in 1945. While VA statistics show that, on average, veterans receive a decision on a claim in six months, a final decision may take years of agency appeals.

Several large studies were issued in 2007 that examined the VA and its handling of veterans' claims. See Report of the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors, July 2007, available at www.pccww.gov; Honoring the Call to Duty: Veterans' Disability Benefits in the 21st Century, October 2007, available at www.vetscommission.org. Criticisms focused on many areas, including the length of time to process claims, outdated disability rating criteria, and, for new veterans, the difficulty in ensuring cooperation between the military branches and VA. These reports, their criticisms, and their suggested changes have started a dialogue, presenting the question:

Should Congress Maintain, Modify, or Completely Redesign the Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits Adjudication Process, and How Would the Result Improve the Current System?

A First Prize of \$3,000.00 and a Second Prize of \$1,500.00 will be awarded as determined by the judges. In addition, the winners will receive active assistance from Paralyzed Veterans in publishing the paper in appropriate professional publications and/or presenting the paper at appropriate professional association gatherings. The competition is open to law students enrolled in ABA-accredited law schools and law school graduates.

Submissions must be received no later than April 30, 2008.

The Paralyzed Veterans of America is a congressionally-chartered, non-profit veterans service organization. Paralyzed Veterans' members are veterans with spinal cord injury or disease. Through our Washington, DC, office and our nationwide network of service offices, Paralyzed Veterans advocates for VA health care and other benefits on behalf of our members and other veterans. The Paralyzed Veterans of America does not have a position on the question posed but hopes to generate discussion in the legal community. For more information about Paralyzed Veterans, please visit www.pva.org.

RULES FOR THE PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA

LEGAL WRITING COMPETITION

1. Students enrolled for the current school year in any law school accredited by the American Bar Association, law professors, and law school graduates are eligible to enter. Employees of the Paralyzed Veterans of America are not eligible to enter.
2. Co-authors are permitted, although only one cash prize will be awarded per entry. Submissions shall be the sole work product of the entrants. For student submissions, papers must be prepared during the current school year; normal comment and guidance by law school faculty is permitted.
3. Papers should be a minimum of 15 pages in length and shall not exceed 30 pages, including footnotes. They must be typed, double-spaced and with one-inch margins, on 8-1/2 x 11 inch paper, preferably in a 12-point or larger serified font, such as Times New Roman. All citations and footnotes should conform to the current edition of The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation.
4. An original and four copies of each entry must be submitted and should be accompanied by an electronic copy provided on a CD or DVD in Word format. Papers are judged anonymously, and no identifying information should appear on either the original or copies of the paper. Entrants must submit a separate cover letter listing any author's name, address, and telephone number and a brief biographical sketch. For law students, the letter must list the law school and graduation year. Each entry shall also be accompanied by a letter from the author or authors certifying that the article submitted has not been previously published and is original work.
5. Papers will be judged generally on their substance, clarity of the proposal or thesis, logical force, support of argument, and quality of research. Grammar, syntax, and form will also be taken into consideration.
6. **Submissions must be received no later than April 30, 2008, to ensure review.** Entries and any questions regarding the Writing Competition should be addressed to:

Ronda L. Whichard, Legal Executive Assistant
Office of General Counsel
Paralyzed Veterans of America
801 18th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006

Questions may also be sent to Ms. Whichard at RondaW@pva.org.

Facsimile or emailed submissions are not permitted. Late submissions will not be considered.

7. The judges anticipate awarding two prizes, a First Place prize of \$3,000.00 and a Second Prize of \$1,500.00, to the papers deemed best in the judges' discretion. Other cash prizes may also be awarded at the discretion of the judges to papers of particular merit, although no prizes may be awarded if no qualifying entries are submitted. Winners will be notified by June 16, 2008. All decisions of the judges are final.

8. Submissions will not be returned to the authors. Submission of a paper grants the Paralyzed Veterans of America the right to publish the paper in its own publications or any other appropriate forum and to publicize biographical information about the author, and entries must be accompanied with a fully completed and executed consent form (attached). If there are co-authors, each author must submit a consent form. Submissions may not be previously published. PVA reserves the right to publish the paper first, after which the author may proceed with publication elsewhere upon notice to PVA. Failure of the author to preserve this grant may result in disqualification.

CONSENT FOR PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA TO PUBLISH IN PRINTED OR ELECTRONIC FORMAT

I, _____, am the author or co-author of the attached original work, titled _____, and I have entered this work in the Paralyzed Veterans of America Legal Writing Competition for 2007-08. This work has not been previously published. I recognize that the Paralyzed Veterans of America may wish to publish this work or information about me in a printed or electronic format, including publications not owned by the Paralyzed Veterans of America, and I grant permission for the work or information to be used or excerpted in any format or forum deemed appropriate by the Paralyzed Veterans of America. I also agree to cooperate in any publishing undertaken by the Paralyzed Veterans of America.

This is a nonexclusive grant; I retain the right to seek other publishers for my work (1) after Paralyzed Veterans of America has initially published the work and (2) if I notify Paralyzed Veterans of America in advance or (3) if Paralyzed Veterans of America has informed me in writing that it does not intend to publish the work.

Signed

Date

Printed Name