

Donald Lassman: Financial Education for Service Members as a Means of Prevention



In 2009, attorney Donald Lassman ([Law Offices of Donald R. Lassman](#)) took two major steps in helping to provide legal assistance to members of the military. First, with the support of the BBA's Bankruptcy Section and the Massachusetts Department of Veterans Services, he helped to organize and execute a series of financial education programs that were presented at VFW Posts throughout Massachusetts for military members and their families. He also accepted an invitation to serve on the new BBA Task Force on Legal Services for Military Veterans and Their Families, which would explore ways for the BBA to provide legal assistance to this population.

Lassman calls it his "good fortune" to have found these avenues to lend his services, stating that, in particular, "the educational seminars were a great experience, providing an opportunity to meet with members of the armed services and provide strategies for avoiding financial problems." His concern about the legal complications and especially the financial challenges that military personnel and veterans could face started after he read a series of articles detailing these prospective hardships for service members. Determined to use education proactively, he took to the road throughout Massachusetts, bringing these lessons to the people who needed it most.

Offering a unique perspective on volunteering to serve the community, Lassman describes his efforts as a "preventative medicine:" rather than providing legal representation, the financial education was designed to identify common financial pitfalls and prevent potential problems that could lead to bankruptcy. He hopes that the programs have been able to "provide information to service members and their families so that they won't end up with financial or legal trouble" and have afforded them a strong foundation of knowledge for their futures.

Through the BBA's military initiatives, Lassman has also shared information with service members at Yellow Ribbon programs, staffing information tables and offering crucial guidance on the tough issues that many service members faced. Lassman says that he felt that he was "making a meaningful difference at a very difficult time of transition in their lives" by providing this one-on-one counseling:

"Service members really appreciate the work that we are able to do on their behalf. I would encourage other lawyers to participate in one of the BBA's many programs that provide legal assistance to members of the military because in so doing, we can show respect for the sacrifice that the service men and women are making and in some small measure thank them for their service."

Lassman also points out that this experience, and different pro bono projects in general, can broaden horizons by providing a departure from the usual day-to-day routine. His travels to VFW

posts around Massachusetts, from Lynn to Holyoke and other diverse locations he might never have visited otherwise, allowed him to help veterans from a range of backgrounds; meeting them in their environment was a powerful experience he has carried with him to this day.

If you want to take your legal expertise on the road – whether it's across the Commonwealth or down the street – check out the BBA's [CLE Series](#) about representing military personnel and veterans, as well as a number of other public service programs.