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With Risk of Recession, New Program Would Give Veterans Free Access to Bankruptcy Attorneys in Florida, California, and Texas

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TAMPA, Fla – With record-inflation and risk of a recession, a new effort is underway in three states to ensure Veterans have access to pro bono bankruptcy attorneys.

The American Bankruptcy Institute (ABI) Task Force on Veterans and Servicemembers Affairs and the Business Law Section of The Florida Bar are creating a pilot program to link Veterans in need of insolvency legal representation to lawyers who can help address their financial issues in Florida. But to officially launch their service, they need more lawyers to sign up as volunteers.

"It's easy for active-duty soldiers to get support through the Legal Assistance for Military Personnel (LAMP) program run by the American Bar Association, but Veterans are not eligible for legal referral," said Shumaker Partner and Financial Institutions and Insurance Business Sector Chair Steve Berman of the ABI Task Force on Veterans and Servicemembers Affairs. "This new program will give Veterans the help they need to address their debt and credit issues in these difficult times. It's the least we can do to honor those who selflessly served our nation."

The pilot-program is slated to be staffed in Florida, Texas, and California—the states with the largest Veteran populations. The goal is to close a gap where Veterans are left without assistance. Active-duty military have access to volunteer lawyers through the ABA's LAMP program. This pilot program would extend pro bono coverage to Veterans.

"We are working hard to get the message out. We need lawyers to sign up now as volunteers, so we can be ready to help our Veterans during these challenging economic times," Steve stressed.

The ABI is developing a list of volunteer-insolvency lawyers, which will be housed and maintained by the ABI and then shared with legal services organizations and Veterans' services organizations in Florida, Texas, and California.

Attorneys in Florida can sign up now on the Business Law Section website in its Veterans Financial Literacy Program to apply and be listed in the directory and can call Steve Berman at 813.227.2332 to discuss the need and opportunities to serve. The plan is to roll out services as soon as a strong network of volunteers is assembled.