

New York State Department of Veterans' Services Announces Recipients of Justice For Heroes Grant

Five Law Schools Across New York State to Receive \$150,000 in State Funding for Innovative Programs Focusing on Meeting Veterans' Legal Needs

ALBANY, NY, UNITED STATES, July 14, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The NYS Department of [Veterans' Services](#) (DVS) today announced the five recipients of New York State's [Justice For Heroes grant](#), a groundbreaking initiative to strengthen access to legal support for Veterans, Service Members, and their Families.

The five recipient schools — Hofstra University School of Law, Syracuse University College of Law, Cornell Law School, University at Buffalo School of Law, and Albany Law School,

respectively — will each receive \$150,000 in state funding to develop or expand legal programs that serve Veterans with pressing civil legal issues, many of which have historically gone unmet.

The grants support experiential legal education initiatives that engage law students and faculty in direct service while helping to close critical justice gaps for those who served. Each institution is eligible to receive a 3-year grant award with \$50,000 in funding available annually, contingent on performance and available resources.

"The Justice For Heroes initiative is more than a grant — it is a powerful commitment to those who have worn the uniform," said Viviana M. DeCohen, Commissioner of the NYS Department of Veterans' Services. "Thanks to Governor Hochul's leadership and vision, we are empowering these law schools to deliver real justice to Veterans across our state."

"This program is a true investment in dignity and fairness for those who served," said Joel Evans, Executive Deputy Commissioner of the NYS Department of Veterans' Services. "By equipping law





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students to step into this important work, we are building a stronger, more inclusive legal system.”

Albany Law will use the funding to expand their direct services to Veterans and support the pipeline of students seeking post-graduate employment in the field of Veteran’s Legal Affairs, including funding summer stipends and supporting supervisory capacity at Veterans’ legal service agencies.

Hofstra University School of Law will use the Justice For Heroes funding to continue to assist Veterans in obtaining necessary medical care through the VA by assisting with discharge upgrades, character of service determinations, and appealing denials of service-connected benefits. Hofstra Law will continue its focus on cases relating to military sexual trauma, which often requires significant coordination with the Veterans’ medical team to understand the nature of the trauma, its connection to their behavior in the service, and the lasting impact it has had on their life.

The Betty and Michael D. Wohl Veterans Legal Clinic at the Syracuse University College of Law plans to leverage grant funding to both expand services for local Veterans and launch a new initiative to support military-connected students, faculty, and staff on campus. This dedicated support will be a first-of-its-kind position in higher education. This funding allows the College of Law to provide dedicated legal help for VA health and disability benefits, while also educating the next generation of Veteran advocates at the College of Law.

Cornell Law School plans to use the funds to support personnel and by investing directly in case development to strengthen the likelihood of success for the school’s Veteran clients in the benefits claims and discharge upgrade petitions. Cornell Law School also plans to use the funding to enhance the student experience by providing more opportunities for its students to engage with the community and offer advice clinics and outreach to eligible veterans.

University at Buffalo School of Law (UB Law) will utilize the grant funding to directly address the needs of its most vulnerable Veterans and their families by concentrating on pension and survivor benefits. Many Veterans and their surviving spouses face significant barriers navigating the complex VA system, resulting in missed opportunities for critical financial support. With this funding, the UB Law Veterans Legal Practicum will expand outreach to underserved communities, provide targeted legal assistance for pension and survivor benefit claims, and offer comprehensive guidance through the application process. By focusing on these benefits—which are often the only source of stability for elderly, disabled, or low-income Veterans and their families—the VLP aims to reduce poverty, prevent homelessness, and improve quality of life.

Samantha Greer, Director, Hofstra Veterans Law Clinic, said, “Our Clinic’s focus on survivors of

sexual assault allows us to fill a gap in the Veterans legal services community, and this grant allows us to reach more Veterans with legal needs that too often fall through the cracks. With this support, our students will gain invaluable hands-on legal experience while providing real assistance to those who served.”

Elizabeth Kubala, Director of Veteran and Military Affairs, Syracuse University College of Law, stated, “We are proud to be part of this statewide effort to ensure that more Veterans have access to justice. The Justice For Heroes grant strengthens our ability to advocate for those whose service deserves nothing less than our full support.”

James Hardwick, Veterans Law Staff Attorney and Adjunct Professor, Cornell Law School, said, “Veterans often face complex legal challenges with limited access to counsel. This funding enables our students and faculty to directly engage with and support these clients in meaningful, lasting ways. Law school clinics are uniquely poised to provide high-level expertise in complex matters, especially related to discharge upgrade petitions and benefits appeals. We look forward to utilizing the awarded state grant funding to continue advancing our critical work and advocacy on behalf of Veterans.”

“As Director of the UB Law Veterans Law Practicum, I see firsthand the challenges our Veterans and their families face in accessing needed benefits,” said Professor David Coombs, Director of the UB Law Veterans Law Practicum. “We are deeply grateful to be selected for this Justice For Heroes grant and proud to serve alongside other outstanding New York law schools in our shared mission to support Veterans.”

Sarah Rogerson, Professor of Law, Director, Field Placement & Pro Bono Scholars Programs and Director, The Edward P. Swyer Justice Center at Albany Law School, said, “This grant funding support expands our ability to provide Veterans with high-quality, no-cost legal assistance. We look forward to deepening our community partnerships and mentoring the next generation of public interest lawyers.”

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