

PRESS RELEASE

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ROA Establishes Servicemembers' Law Center

WASHINGTON – The Reserve Officers Association of the United States established a law center benefiting service men and women and serving as a resource of expertise for legislators and policy makers on Capitol Hill today.

“With the heavy reliance on Reserve and Guard members in today’s fight, we are seeing many challenges with laws affecting our Citizen Warriors and their employers,” said retired Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Dennis M. McCarthy, ROA executive director. “Citizen warriors need advocates; employers need both education and support; and laws need to be improved. Through this new law center, ROA will be the primary voice on Capitol Hill and around the country for these issues.”

“For many years we have been the leader in providing these services to Citizen Warriors, but we knew we needed to do more. This Center will give us that opportunity,” he said.

The center will help formulate legislation and military policy regarding legal issues of importance to members of all branches and components of the Armed Forces of the United States, with particular emphasis on the Uniformed Servicemembers Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA), and military voting rights.

As a center of excellence in the areas of legal research, appellate advocacy and continuing legal education (CLE) to attorneys and law schools, the ROA Law Center stands out as a unique operation among other national security focused advocacy groups on Capitol Hill.

The center will also coordinate the activities of lawyers and legal service providers who seek to help servicemembers in these areas of the law nationwide.

The Center also will file *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) briefs on behalf of ROA in USERRA and SCRA cases that have national significance.

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LAW CENTER

The new Director of the law center, a retired Judge Advocate from the Navy, Capt. Samuel F. Wright, brings extensive military and civilian experience in the areas of labor law, military law, veterans' rights, and military voting rights. He was commissioned an ensign in 1973 via the Navy's Judge Advocate General's Corps Student Program.

Captain Wright is one of the foremost experts on USERRA. He worked for 10 years as a U.S. Department of Labor attorney during which time he and Susan M. Webman drafted the interagency product that eventually became USERRA.

For ROA, Captain Wright has been the primary author of over 400 law review articles, mostly pertaining to USERRA, that have been published by ROA in *The Officer* magazine and posted to the web at www.roa.org/law_review.

"My e-mail address appears after many of the articles," he said. "As a result, I receive and respond to U.S. military personnel and Guard or Reserve members all over the world, including Iraq and Afghanistan."

In 1994, Congress enacted USERRA, codified in title 38, United States Code, sections 4301-4335 (38 U.S.C. 4301-4335). It is the law that protects the civilian job rights of veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserve. USERRA protects them from discrimination and gives them the right to reemployment in their civilian jobs after voluntary or involuntary military service. USERRA is more important than ever, as more than 700,000 National Guard and Reserve personnel have been mobilized since September 2001.

Captain Wright is a member in good standing of the District of Columbia bar and also of the bars of several other courts, including the United States Supreme Court.

The Reserve Officers Association is the professional association for all uniformed services of the United States. Chartered by Congress and in existence since 1922, ROA advises and educates the Congress, the President and the American people on issues of national security, with unique expertise on Reserve issues. ROA advocates for adequate funding of equipment and training requirements, recruiting and retention incentives, and employment rights for all members of the Reserve.