

# VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

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**Fall 2025**

## **FEDERAL JUDGE ALLOWS VETERANS ADVOCACY NON-PROFIT TO CONTINUE LITIGATION AGAINST LOUISIANA ATTORNEY GENERAL**

Calling the notion that the Slidell-based Military-Veterans Advocacy, Inc., (MVA), has no standing to sue over a state law that would interfere with legal representation for veterans “nonsensical,” Judge Bryan A. Jackson yesterday ruled that Attorney General Liz Murrill is a valid defendant.

MVA, a national nonprofit that serves the interests of armed services members and veterans, in June 2024 sued Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry and Attorney General Elizabeth Murrill over the unconstitutional nature of recent legislation that Landry allowed to become law without his signature. The impact of this law would allow unlicensed and unaccredited organizations to represent veterans without any

**Fighting for  
Veterans Benefits**

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oversight.

Senate Bill 159 (SB159), by Sen. Stewart Cathey, imposed a cap of \$12,500 on attorney fees for lawyers who represent veterans. The cap is an overreach into Federal jurisdiction and regulations, and is unconstitutional, MVA alleges.

“The intent of this bill may have been to protect veterans from predatory law firms that exploit situations to maximize profit, to the detriment of proper legal service,”

Cdr. John Wells (USN, Ret.), MVA’s executive director and an attorney who focuses his practice on veterans law, said at the time of the filing. “The outcome of this law will, instead, limit veterans’ access to adequate counsel.”

Among other things, MVA’s suit cites the case of *Procopio v. Wilkie*, which MVA litigated in federal court and which extended VA benefits to 90,000 veterans. MVA’s counsel devoted more than 300 hours to that case, in addition to those worked by a Washington-based law firm.

“The fee cap imposed in SB159 would not have allowed that work to be

completed, and 90,000 deserving veterans would still be without benefits,” Wells said at the time. “Additionally, federal

law passed in 1988 already covers fees for veteran-related cases, and Article V of the State Constitution assigns regulation of Attorneys to the Supreme Court – not the Legislature.”

Jackson dismissed the suit against Gov. Landry. “We’re very happy with Judge Jackson’s decision,” Wells said. “While we fully support protecting veterans – and all citizens – from predatory practices, this Act of the Legislature is not an effective way to accomplish that; on the contrary, it would severely limit access to legal representation for veterans.

“I’ve reached out to the A.G.’s office today to engage in further discussions,” Wells said. “Hopefully, this matter can be resolved without further cost to the people of Louisiana, and lawyers acting in good faith may continue to provide the best representation possible for America’s veterans and active-duty service members.”

## Message from the Chairman

"Aloha. My name is Mr. Hand." -Fast Times at Ridgemont High (1982).

Well, maybe not. However, my first boat was out of Pearl Harbor, so the sentiment remains.

Aloha!

You are reading this right around Labor Day. We hope for all of you a last gasp of the summer before kids and grandkids go back to school. We are eagerly looking forward to the

resumption of Congress after Labor Day. There are plenty of bills on which we have our eyes. More information about those should be in the Legislative Director's comments.

We have been involved with several amicus, or friend of the Court, briefs since my last communication. We would like to thank Melanie Bostwick and the entire crew over at Orrick, for ensuring that we are kept abreast of cases that deserve our input.



We are also fast approaching the cold season. That means we will soon be opening our annual elections. Military-Veterans Advocacy can always use fresh blood in our elections and our boardroom. If you have been thinking about running for a position on our working Board, this is the year to pull the trigger.

In Service,

Brian Lewis



**Brian Lewis**  
**2025 Chairman of the Board**

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## MVA 3rd Quarter Highlights: Advocacy, Awareness, and Appreciation

It was a busy and productive quarter for the Military Veterans Advocacy team. In July, we traveled to Washington, D.C., where John Wells and Hope Bald kept pace on scooters as we met with legislators, staffers, and members of the veterans committees. Our conversations focused on critical issues affecting veterans, including Agent Orange, toxic exposures, Traumatic Brain Injury, and PTSD.

Among the many impactful meetings, we had meaningful discussions with Rep. Gen. Jack Bregman of Michigan and Senator Bill Cassidy of Louisiana. We also met with Rep. Dr. Greg Murphy of North Carolina, sponsor of H.R. 1336, which supports Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy — a treatment three MVA board members have personally undergone. On the Senate side, many offices welcomed visitors with open doors and creative displays. One standout was Senator John Kennedy's Louisiana-themed office, complete with a massive gator that made quite the impression.

Back home, MVA was honored to be selected as the Charity of the Month by the Pearl River County Realtor Association in Mississippi. This generous and spirited group hosted a Singo event — a musical twist on Bingo — to raise awareness, support, and funding for our mission. Their hospitality and enthusiasm were deeply appreciated.



Commander John Wells and Hope Bald, MVA Treasurer In front of US Capitol after meeting with Senator Cassidy and Congressman Greg Murphy advocating for Veterans benefits.



Commander John Wells, Ron Bald, MVA Director of Education and Hope Bald, MVA Treasurer with Rep. Dr. Murphy



Hope Bald, MVA Treasurer with Senator Kennedy's alligator

From Capitol Hill to community tables, this quarter was a testament to the power of advocacy and connection. Whether rolling through D.C. on scooters, standing beside Doc Murphy, or sharing stories at local events, MVA continues to push forward with purpose.

Thanks,  
*Hope*

W. Hope Bald



MVA participating in the Pearl River County Realtors Expo

**Win Big!**  
DRAWING 11/2/2025

**\$20.00 PER TICKET  
OR 5 FOR \$80.00**

1<sup>ST</sup> PLACE: LIMITED EDITION HENRY REPEATING RIFLE .22 LR  
GOLDEN BOY WITH 250<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
SHOT HEARD 'ROUND THE WORLD ENGRAVED RIFLE

2<sup>ND</sup> PLACE: SMITH & WESSON  
MODEL 66 .357 COMBAT MAGNUM

3<sup>RD</sup> PLACE: \$250

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## 2025 Board Members

**Brian Lewis** Chairman of the Board

**Michael Kvintus** Vice Chairman

**Commander John B. Wells**  
Executive Director & Secretary  
(U.S. Navy - Retired)

**W. Hope Bald** - Treasurer

**Ron Bald** - Director of Education  
(USCG - Retired)

**Sgt. Major Jim Kuiken**

Director, Native & Indigenous American  
Veteran Outreach (USMC - Retired)

**Mike Yates**

Blue Water Navy Chief of Staff

**Anthony West** - Board Member at Large

**Cheryl Cox** - Guam & Central Pacific Islands

**Susie Belanger** - Board Member at Large

**Jacqueline Bloom** - Board Member at Large

**Cheryl Causey Cox** - Board Member at  
Large

**Jimmie Scott** - Board Member at Large  
(U.S. Army - Retired)



## Message from the Director of Education

I am Ron Bald, a retired Coast Guard Commander serving as the MVA Director of Education since April 2025. Working with other Board members, I am seeking opportunities to present Continuing Legal Education courses and broaden our outreach. We have tremendous potential to partner with others, develop new learning strategies, and give people effective tools to support our veterans. I look forward to working with and for you. Please reach out to me at [ron.bald@madvocacy](mailto:ron.bald@madvocacy) with ideas and thoughts. Your input is always welcome and appreciated.

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# EARLY BIRD

## Membership

Join MVA for 2026 for just \$35!

Effective January 1, 2026, the annual membership rate will increase to \$40.

**GOOD THRU**  
DECEMBER 31, 2025

**JOIN TODAY!**

Join by visiting our website:  
[www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org](http://www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org)

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## Strategic Planning Committee Update

Chairman Brian Lewis has directed the standing Strategic Planning Committee to develop a draft strategic plan for the Board's consideration. The committee has been meeting regularly since July and will be submitting a draft plan to the Board of Directors in early October. The plan will contain suggested updates to the MVA vision, mission, and purpose. It will also designate specific areas of emphasis, and provide action ideas that can be implemented immediately.

## Fighting for Veterans Benefits

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Mike Yates  
MVA Chief of Staff  
Blue Water Navy Association Director  
[Mike.Yates@madvocacy.org](mailto:Mike.Yates@madvocacy.org)

## From Chief of Staff

You may have noticed that we are pushing Membership and donations lately. We need to keep doing this if we want to continue our fighting next year.

Here are some things you can do to help. Starting October 1, 2025, we will be offering early membership for the next year, we do this each year. You can go to <https://charity.pledgeit.org/c/9jMIJyaA2r> to join.

Of course, you can always make donations by going to <https://charity.pledgeit.org/c/TFIz9IEEPw>

Another way you can help is Sponsorship. You may work for a Company that will do a Sponsorship, you may have a local company that will do a sponsorship, or you may want to do a Sponsorship. Just have them go to <https://www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org/sponsorship-levels.html> to create the Sponsorship.

Another thing you can do is help us expand. If you belong to a Facebook Page that you feel may be helped from some of the information we post, please email me a link to either [commander@bluewaternavy.org](mailto:commander@bluewaternavy.org) or [mike.yates@madvocacy.org](mailto:mike.yates@madvocacy.org). I will be happy to contact them and ask permission to post on their page.

We are also looking to expand to the other branches of Service. Two things we need from them is for them let them us know what we can do to help them, and we need to know of their Facebook Page or Website. Email me any suggestions.



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# Blue Water Navy

As you know we, Military Veterans Advocacy® & Blue Water Navy Association™ are the ones that made it possible for Blue Water Navy Veterans to start to receive benefits, we also had a big part in getting the PACT ACT passed. Now we are working hard in trying to extend the line in Vietnam to where it was before 2002, which was the Vietnam Service Medal Line. We are going to need everyone's help in doing this. Just like we use to do prior to 2018, we are going to ask you to contact you members of Congress and request they support it. They do take notice of our calls and our emails. I am also going to encourage everyone to contact both the Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committee on a weekly basis. We need to keep the pressure on, and we need to be very respectful.

As you may know, for our members, I will do research for the Deck Logs that BWN Veteran's needs, and I will create a plot using them. Right now, I have filled over 335 requests for members and check over 500 requests for Non-Members that let them know if I could help them or not.



## Susie Says

### Fighting for Blue Water Navy Veterans

Susie has been working on the Senate side to restore the territorial sea coordinates off Vietnam. This critical adjustment would ensure that Navy veterans—currently excluded from the original Blue Water Navy package—receive the benefits they earned for their exposure to Agent Orange.

We are encouraged that a senator has expressed interest and will be reaching out to the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC) for approval. We'll keep you updated as more information becomes available.



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## Honoring Service – Human and Canine

Sgt. Major Jim Kuiken (USMC - Retired) Director, Native & Indigenous American Veteran Outreach

At a recent event at Loudoun Therapeutic Riding, a State Senator presented a proclamation recognizing the healing power of their programs. Several veterans, including myself, have found hope and strength there. I was invited specifically to meet with the Senator and share the mission of Military-Veterans Advocacy®—our work on the PACT Act, Blue Water Navy, NIAV initiatives, and more.

I also spoke about my service dog, Freedom, who came from K9s For Warriors and truly saved my life. But his impact extended far beyond me. Freedom was recognized by both the U.S. Senate and House for his role in helping pass the Blue Water Navy Act and the PACT Act, legislation that has changed the lives of thousands of veterans. In his honor, a U.S. flag was flown over the Capitol and presented to him. The Mayor of Vienna, Virginia, also held a ceremony to present a proclamation acknowledging his years of dedicated service.

Moments like these remind us why MVA's mission is so vital. By telling our stories, building connections, and honoring every form of service, we continue to move the needle for veterans who deserve to be heard and recognized.



Reminder

**The 2025 MVA Annual Meeting will take place in November.**

If you are interested in serving on the board for 2025 - 2026, please send a Bio to [Robin.Barr@madvocacy.org](mailto:Robin.Barr@madvocacy.org) by **October 31, 2025.**



**MVA is on the list for 2025 CFC charities.**

Our CFC Number is 59905. All gifts directly empower volunteer-driven legal and legislative advocacy for our nation's veterans.

Let's Connect



<https://givecfc.org>