

2015 John Adams and John Quincy Adams  
Pro Bono Publico Awards

John J. Regan

for his pro bono work on behalf of military veterans, and on behalf of victims of the cholera epidemic in Haiti following the 2010 earthquake in that country.

Jack Regan, a graduate of the University of Notre Dame and New York University School of Law, is a partner in the Litigation/Controversy Department of WilmerHale, where he serves, among other roles, as the co-chair of the firm's Pro Bono and Community Service Committee. Since the beginning of his legal career approximately 38 years ago, Mr. Regan has dedicated more than 4,000 hours to pro bono work and has played an integral role in more than 70 matters. It goes without saying that his passion for and commitment to the provision of pro bono legal services has been wide and deep, and he has positively impacted the lives of countless individuals facing challenging circumstances.

Today, our recognition of Mr. Regan's pro bono service focuses on two of his significant and ongoing endeavors -- protection of the rights of military veterans, and justice for the victims of the cholera epidemic in Haiti.

As a veteran of the United States Navy, the values of service, sacrifice, determination, and comradeship were instilled in Mr. Regan at an early age. Over the years, those values have been reflected in his commitment to ensuring that the men and women who serve this country are able to access essential legal services, regardless of their financial circumstances. Responding to concerns expressed by the National Guard about the unmet legal needs of troops deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan, Mr. Regan rolled up his sleeves and led the effort to address those needs, drawing on his own military experience for guidance. Several years ago, during his tenure as President of the Boston Bar Association, Mr. Regan established the "Committee for Legal Services for Veterans, Military Personnel, and

Families" to address issues arising from lengthy deployments. Based on the Committee's research and analysis, a "Veterans Initiative" evolved to address the challenges faced by service members and their families concerning domestic relations, veterans' benefits, and discharge classifications. By cataloging existing legal services, identifying service gaps, strategizing how to fill such gaps, bringing disparate players to the table, and encouraging collaboration to build new vehicles for pro bono work, the Committee -- under Mr. Regan's leadership -- has exponentially increased the resources available to indigent veterans. Among other programs, volunteer attorneys now offer legal advice and information at Massachusetts National Guard events, both pre-deployment and post-deployment. A dedicated "Military & Veterans Legal Help Line" also has been established to connect military personnel and their families to qualified attorneys on specialized military panels. In the last four years, the Help Line

has fielded more than 1,200 calls from service members or their families in need of legal assistance.

As military deployments have slowed in recent years, the "Committee for Legal Services for Veterans, Military Personnel, and Families" has evolved to more significantly address the legal needs of veterans once their service has ended. While veterans make up only 8% of the general population, they comprise more than 30% of the homeless population. Many of these veterans are facing the lasting physical, mental, and emotional consequences of their military service, and they often need help in accessing benefits and services, dealing with consumer debt, managing family turmoil, preventing eviction from their homes, and handling other legal obstacles to independent living. Historically, the unique needs of veterans have largely gone unmet by traditional legal assistance organizations. Through his unflagging efforts, Mr. Regan has greatly expanded the available legal resources for this underserved population which has already given so much in the

service of our country. Thanks to Mr. Regan's ongoing perseverance and commitment, the programs he established with the Boston Bar Association are going strong and will no doubt continue long into the future.

Apart from his work with the BBA, Mr. Regan has been instrumental in the implementation of a pro bono partnership between the attorneys at WilmerHale and Veterans Legal Services. As just one example that typifies many others, a WilmerHale associate working under Mr. Regan's tutelage recently helped a World War II veteran and his wife resolve a complex benefits issue with the Department of Veterans Affairs. The veteran suffered from dementia due to a head injury he sustained in a racially motivated assault that occurred during his service, shortly after integration of the military. Under Mr. Regan's leadership, WilmerHale successfully resolved the matter, such that the veteran and his wife no longer faced the risk of homelessness.

This past June, Mr. Regan and his team at WilmerHale, in conjunction with Veterans Legal Services

and the Harvard Legal Service Center, launched the "Veterans Justice Pro Bono Partnership" which provides representation to "less than honorably" discharged veterans so they can upgrade their classifications. Having a "less than honorable" discharge can prevent a former service member from accessing care and treatment from the Department of Veterans Affairs, and can impede efforts towards attaining stable employment, housing, and education. Moreover, these veterans often struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, depression, and homelessness. Mr. Regan has devoted countless hours to investigating how best to serve these veterans, who are among the most vulnerable and often have little to no access to legal services. In the words of Anna Schleelein Richardson, the co-executive director of Veterans Legal Services, "[Mr. Regan's] passionate commitment to pro bono services for veterans is unmatched in the Massachusetts legal community," and "[no] candidate [is] more deserving of

the Adams Pro Bono Publico Award." We couldn't agree more!

In addition to Mr. Regan's pro bono work on behalf of veterans throughout Massachusetts, he also has embarked on a critically important project with the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti. This Boston-based nonprofit organization supports the Haitian people in their struggles to achieve, among other goals, universal human rights and access to an impartial legal system. In 2010, a catastrophic 7.0 magnitude earthquake devastated the island nation. United Nations peacekeepers were deployed to the country to provide earthquake relief. Following an unprecedented outbreak of cholera shortly after the earthquake, Haitians began to suspect that a group of peacekeepers had brought the disease with them from another country, and that the disease had contaminated Haiti's main water supply. Mr. Regan and his colleagues at the Institute initiated efforts to help the victims of this outbreak, which became the largest

epidemic of its kind in the world. An estimated 9,000 Haitians have died from cholera, and approximately 700,000 have been infected. Mr. Regan and his colleagues filed a lawsuit against the United Nations, first raising their claims in an administrative petition to the U.N., and then before a Federal court in the Southern District of New York. After a judge dismissed the case on the ground that the United Nations is immune from suit, Mr. Regan and his colleagues filed an appeal in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, arguing that the U.N.'s immunity is conditional and not applicable in this case because of the U.N.'s failure to follow certain conventions and principles of international law. The appeal currently is pending.

Throughout Mr. Regan's career, he has exemplified unmatched dedication to the advancement of social and legal justice for all people, notwithstanding their economic circumstances. The work performed by Jack Regan is, in a word, inspirational. His commitment to



providing pro bono services to address the very serious challenges facing veterans in Massachusetts and cholera victims in Haiti truly exemplifies the spirit of the Adams Award. The legal community extends to him its profound gratitude, its sincere appreciation, and its heartfelt thanks.