

WHY VETERANS MAKE GREAT LAWYERS

By Kevin Cieply, President and Dean, Ave Maria School of Law

As we mark Veterans Day 2017, it is truly a time to honor the great sacrifices made by our men and women in uniform. They deserve our nation's full praise and gratitude. The purpose of this writing, however, is to suggest a subtler reason to celebrate Veterans Day—a reason to celebrate not just the past contributions our veterans made to our nation, but to also celebrate the treasure our veterans represent for the future of our great country.

From basic training, advanced individual training, the Academies (Air Force Academy, West Point, Naval Academy, and the Coast Guard Academy), ROTC, Officer Candidate School, Navy Seal Training, to the first and last duty assignment, the military is in a league of its own when it comes to transforming young men and women into skilled leaders. No education, no civilian job, no civilian training, can match the military.

As president of Ave Maria Law in Naples, Florida, I rely on my military training every day. That's why our school actively recruits members of the armed services. We know that an applicant with military experience has demonstrated his or her character, discipline, and willingness to serve others. We're well aware of this because Ave Law's founder, Tom Monaghan, is a veteran, and three of our faculty members are retired JAG officers (the military term for lawyers).

Veterans bring not only a sense of service to our school, they bring maturity, a code of conduct, and a well-developed skill-set of operating in stress filled environments.

Soldiers, marines, sailors and airmen are organized, focused, and determined. They are ready, willing and able, dedicated to the greater good. In military-speak, veterans are "Hooah!"

"Hooah," historically stood for "Heard, Understood, and Acknowledged." The contemporary spelling is a phonetic version of its historic acronym. In a vacuum, Hooah defies precise definition, as its uses can be varied and multifaceted. But in context, among military members, its meaning is always crystal clear. Hooah invokes a warrior ethos: no complaining, no whining, no blaming others, no excuses, just "get 'er done." It stands for mission accomplishment, under the rules, the right way. It is the type of attitude that is

easily transferrable to successful civilian life, including law school and the practice of law.

Two veterans now studying at Ave Law, Joseph Bare and Sean Lux, exemplify these character traits.

Joseph is a retired Army combat veteran. He is 48 years old and in his second year at Ave Law. Fellow students look up to Joe. He is calm, confident, settled. He exudes integrity. Students, staff, and the faculty trust and respect him, completely. He approaches law school with structure, with a plan, staying ahead of assignments, creating his own outlines, and consequently and unsurprisingly, he excels in his academics, presently in the top of his class and participating in Ave Maria's Law Review.

Sean Lux, who expects to graduate in December, served in the Air Force, reaching the rank of Technical Sergeant. He is widely and universally respected on campus, and revered in the community. Sean and his wife Debi founded the Collier County Honor Flight program, which flies veterans to our national capital to visit our war memorials. The veterans are greeted back home at the airport, with a hero's welcome. Sean is also at the top of his class academically while also taking a tremendous amount of time to serve his community.

Perhaps, one of the best ways to honor our veterans on this Veterans Day, is to recognize their worth post-military, to give them a path forward after they separate or retire from service.

Our country counts on our veterans for its existence. Literally, when everything is on the line—the lives of our children, the lives of our mothers, our entire way of life—we look to our servicemembers. Given we chose to place our nation's future in the hands of our veterans, then perhaps, when it comes time to hire a plumber, or accept or reject a law school applicant, or hire an attorney, think about choosing a veteran—it is a right choice!