

12TH ANNUAL

MIZZOU LAW

VETERANS CLINIC

SYMPOSIUM

Show-Me Access: Legal Advocacy for Rural
Veterans

PROGRAM

APRIL 10, 2026

9:00 AM - 3:10 PM

University of Missouri School of Law
820 Conley Avenue
Columbia, MO 65211

Online & In-Person

GENERAL INFORMATION

About the Mizzou Law Veterans Clinic

Established in 2014, the Clinic represents veterans and their families regarding VA disability benefits and discharge upgrades. Since its inception, the Clinic has secured more than \$20 million in VA disability compensation for its clients as well as numerous discharge upgrades.

Law students can participate in the Clinic as part of their law school curriculum where they get hands-on experience working with real clients prior to graduating. The Clinic offers various types of courses including Veterans Clinic, Advanced Veterans Clinic, Veterans Law, Military Law, and Law of War.

The Clinic also has several programs aimed at specific efforts. These programs include initiative regarding amicus briefing, rural veteran outreach, veteran homelessness, military lawyer support, and a partnership between the Veterans Clinic and Mizzou's medical school.

The Clinic operates on funding from the Missouri State Legislature, grants from the federal government, and private donations. Private donations remain a substantial portion of the Clinic's operating budget.

The Annual Symposium

Each year since its inception in 2014, the Veterans Clinic has held a Symposium on important topics impacting the veteran community. This year's Symposium centers on the topic of legal advocacy for rural veterans. Previous topics include burn pits, traumatic brain injuries, veteran homelessness and more.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Food

Breakfast and lunch are being offered to our in-person attendees who registered prior to attending the Symposium. Walk-ins the day of the Symposium are always welcome but may not be guaranteed a meal.

Livestream

The Symposium will be live streamed on the Symposium webpage. The livestream is embedded in the webpage, but you may click on the title of the video to open the livestream in a separate window. Attendees attending virtually will have the opportunity to ask questions to the panelists. If you would like to ask a question, please place your question in YouTube's livestream chat feature. A representative in person will ask your question on your behalf. Please note that due to the time constraints associated with the Symposium we may not be able to get to all the questions.

OUR SPONSORS

The Mizzou Law Veterans Clinic is proud to offer its symposium free of charge to all attendees. Hosting this impactful event requires significant resources, including audio/visual services, catering, and travel for our distinguished speakers.

We are deeply grateful to our community of sponsors whose generosity makes this possible. Their support helps cover these essential expenses, allowing us to create a high-quality event that reaches and inspires hundreds of participants annually. Thank you to the following sponsors who have generously provided financial support to this year's Symposium:

Berry Law

Benson Law Firm

Bryan, Cave, Leighton, Paisner

Harper, Evans, Hilbrenner & Netemeyer

Joe Machens Nissan

The Hon. John Walker

Paul LLP Trial Attorneys

Shook, Hardy & Bacon

CLE INFORMATION

The 12th annual Mizzou Law Veterans Clinic Symposium will be held online and in-person. The Symposium has been pre-approved for CLE credit in Missouri. For more information, please navigate to the Symposium webpage via our website at:

veteransclinic.missouri.edu

Attendance Code

Online attendees are **required** to submit the attendance code that will be offered to attendees during the Symposium. A link to the webpage to enter the attendance code is available on the Symposium webpage. The option to submit the attendance code will remain open from the start of the Symposium to shortly afterwards. By inputting the attendance code, we can verify that you attended the Symposium online. This is a requirement for most, if not all, states that CLE has been approved in. The list of those attendees who submitted the attendance code will be provided to various state bar associations. Please be sure to submit this attendance code during the Symposium.

CLE Feedback & Certificate Request

We would appreciate your feedback on the presentations you viewed for the Symposium. A survey link is available on the Symposium webpage to provide your thoughts and feedback. Additionally, if you need to request a CLE certificate of attendance, the same survey provides an option at the end to request a certificate. Please note that certificates will only be provided to those attendees who registered for the Symposium and who filled out the attendance code form.

SCHEDULE

TIME	PRESENTATION	SPEAKER(S)
8:15 – 9:00 AM	Breakfast	N/A
9:00 – 9:15 AM	Opening Remarks	Provost Matt Martens and Dean Paul Litton
8:05 – 8:15 AM	Introductory Information	Martha Kleinhesselink
9:15 – 9:45 AM	Thomas Fellowship Advocacy Model	Benjamin Thomas and Brent Filbert
9:45 – 10:45 AM	Core Legal Claims for Rural Veterans	Carter Templeton & Michael Deaton
10:45 – 11:30 AM	Mobile Legal Services & the Show-Me Access Model	Martha Kleinhesselink & Hannah Eastland
11:30 – 12:00 PM	Lunch	N/A
12:00 – 1:00 PM	Keynote	Dr. Peter Kaboli
1:00 – 1:50 PM	Legal Barriers & Systemic Challenges Facing Rural Veterans	Hillary Wandler
1:50 – 2:00 PM	Break	N/A
2:00 – 3:00 PM	Voices from the Field	Ally Brown, Hon. Kevin Hillman, & Brent Filbert
3:00 – 3:10 PM	Closing Remarks	Brent Filbert

PRESENTATION DESCRIPTIONS

PRESENTATION	PRESENTATION DESCRIPTION
Thomas Fellowship Advocacy Model	An introduction to the Thomas Fellowship and how it supports sustained, community-based legal advocacy for rural veterans across Missouri.
Core Legal Claims for Rural Veterans	A practical discussion of the most common VA disability, discharge upgrade, and benefits claims affecting rural veterans and how to effectively develop them.
Mobile Legal Services & the Show-Me Access Model	An explanation of the Show-Me Access approach to delivering mobile, on-site legal services to veterans in underserved rural communities.
Keynote	A keynote address examining veteran access to care and services, with a focus on systemic challenges and opportunities for interdisciplinary solutions.
Legal Barriers & Systemic Challenges Facing Rural Veterans	A discussion on the legal, geographic, and institutional barriers rural veterans face when seeking benefits, healthcare, and justice..
Voices from the Field	Firsthand perspectives from practitioners and advocates working directly with veterans in rural and underserved areas.

SPEAKERS

SPEAKER	BIOGRAPHY
Matt Martens	<p>Matthew Martens was appointed provost and executive vice chancellor for academic affairs on June 1, 2024, after serving as senior vice provost from 2021-2024 and associate provost for academic programs from 2016-2021. During his time in the Provost's Office, he has been instrumental in facilitating MizzouForward, which resulted in recruiting more than 75 premier scientists and scholars to campus. He led the university's Academic Operations Team during the pandemic and redesigned the academic program assessment process to be more data-driven and aligned with accreditation requirements. In 2025, he led the university through a successful reaccreditation process with the Higher Learning Commission. Dr. Martens is currently the chair of the Southeastern Conference Provosts group. He received a bachelor's degree from Boston College in 1995, a master's degree from the University of North Carolina in 1997, and a doctorate in counseling psychology from the University of Missouri in 2002. Dr. Martens had prior academic appointments at the University at Albany-State University of New York and the University of Memphis before returning to the faculty at MU in 2009. His primary research interest is health psychology, particularly addictive behaviors. He has been either a principal or co-investigator on multiple federally and foundation-funded studies examining the efficacy of brief motivational interventions at reducing at-risk alcohol use and harmful gambling behaviors. He has over 125 peer-reviewed publications and book chapters to his credit.</p>
Benjamin Thomas	<p>Mr. Thomas received his Bachelors of Science as well as his Juris Doctor from the University of Missouri Columbia. Mr. Thomas practiced law in Arizona for 40 plus years. As an attorney, he received numerous accolades, including recognition as one of Arizona's Top Lawyers and Arizona Defense Attorney of the Year. He is one of only 7,300 trial attorneys in the country recognized by the American Board of Trial Advocates. Mr. Thomas enjoyed sharing his years of legal experience with firm clients and the junior lawyers of the firm. In his free time, Mr. Thomas enjoys supporting Missouri Tiger Athletics, playing golf, as well as spending time with his grandchildren. Mr. Thomas and his wife Carolyn have been proud, longtime supporters of the Mizzou Law Veterans Clinic. In 2021, they established the Thomas Fellowship which allows a full-time staff attorney to direct the Clinic's outreach program, Tigers for Troops.</p>
Brent Filbert	<p>Brent Filbert is Director of The Veterans Clinic at the University of Missouri School of Law, where he also teaches Military Law and Law of Armed Conflict. He brings over 35 years of legal experience in both military and private practice, including roles as a Navy appellate judge, prosecutor, defense counsel, and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney. He previously led military law efforts at the Veteran Advocacy Project and worked as a litigation partner at Shook, Hardy & Bacon. A Mizzou alum, he earned his J.D. with distinction from UMKC, an LL.M. in Trial Advocacy from Temple, and is a distinguished graduate of the Naval War College. He joined the clinic to train students through impactful work serving veterans.</p>

SPEAKERS

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Carter Templeton	Carter Brooks Templeton serves as an attorney at the University of Missouri School of Law Veterans Clinic. Before joining the Veterans Clinic, Carter practiced appellate litigation at Chisholm, Chisholm, and Kilpatrick in Providence, Rhode Island, focusing exclusively on veterans' law. He has briefed cases in multiple federal courts, including the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims and the U.S. Court of Federal Claims, presented oral argument in federal court, argued numerous cases before administrative law judges, and contributed to amicus briefing before the United States Supreme Court on matters affecting veterans' rights. He is also a member of the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims Bar Association, National Law School Veterans Clinic Consortium, and the National Organization of Veterans Advocates.
Michael Deaton	Michael Deaton is an United States Army veteran and a former client of the Mizzou Law Veterans Clinic. During his honorable military service, he earned the Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, and the Army Good Conduct Medal, and qualified as a sharpshooter on multiple weapons systems. He lives with his wife, Wendy, in Noel, Missouri, a rural community of just over 2,000 residents. Mr. Deaton and his family are dedicated supporters of the Clinic and its mission to serve those who have served our country.
Martha Bradley Kleinhesselink	Martha (Bradley) Kleinhesselink works as an attorney at the Mizzou Law Veterans Clinic representing veterans and their families before the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense. In addition to representing clients, Martha supervises law students, teaches the law school's doctrinal Veterans Law course and manages the Medical/Legal Partnership between the Veterans Clinic and the Mizzou School of Medicine. Martha previously served as the inaugural Ben and Carolyn Thomas Fellow. Martha received degrees in Political Science and Criminal Justice and earned her JD from Mizzou Law where she participated in the Veterans Clinic.
Hannah Eastland	Hannah Eastland serves as the Ben and Carolyn Thomas Fellow at the Veterans Clinic at the University of Missouri School of Law, where she leads the Tigers for Troops rural outreach program. In this role, she ensures that veterans in even the most remote parts of Missouri have access to the benefits they've earned through service. A proud alumna of Mizzou Law, Hannah also holds a B.S. in Legal Studies and Political Science, along with A.A. degrees in Russian Studies, Intelligence Studies and Technology, and Social Work, and is Project Management Professional (PMP) certified.

SPEAKERS

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Dr. Peter Kaboli	<p>Dr. Peter Kaboli was named Executive Director of the Office of Rural Health (ORH) in 2024, where he leads a portfolio of partnerships, research initiatives, and innovation programs aimed at increasing access to care for hundreds of thousands of rural Veterans. He oversees the activities of five Veterans Rural Health Resource Centers located in Iowa City, Salt Lake City, White River Junction, Gainesville, and Portland, which serve as hubs of rural health care research, innovation, and dissemination. He ensures ORH fulfills its legislative mandate to conduct rural Veteran-focused research, create innovative solutions to access challenges, and disseminate those solutions system-wide. He serves as a core investigator with the Comprehensive Access and Delivery Research and Evaluation Center of Innovation, a hospitalist at the Iowa City VA Healthcare System, and a professor of internal medicine at the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine. Dr. Kaboli earned his BS in biology, MS in epidemiology, and MD from the University of Iowa, completing his residency at LDS Hospital in Salt Lake City in 1998 and his General Medicine and VA Quality Scholars Fellowships at the University of Iowa in 2000. He has held leadership positions including Chief of Medicine at the Iowa City VA Healthcare System, Veterans Rural Health Resource Center Director, and Senior Scholar of the VA Quality Scholars Fellowship program. His research interests include health care access, rural health, inpatient medical care quality, and interventions to optimize medication delivery to vulnerable Veteran populations.</p>
Hillary Wandler	<p>Professor Wandler is a tenured member of the law faculty at the University of Montana in Missoula, where she has taught and practiced law through the Veterans Advocacy Clinic since 2008. She is the Director of the School of Law's in-house Veterans Advocacy Clinic. She has served as Associate Dean of Students from 2017-2019 and is now the Director of the Clinical Law Program. Professor Wandler joined the School of Law faculty in 2008 after clerking for Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals Judge James R. Browning, clerking for U.S. District Court Judge Donald W. Molloy, and practicing law with Garlington, Lohn & Robinson in Missoula, Montana. She continues to represent veterans in disability claims and appeals, collaborating with students in the Veterans Advocacy Clinic. She received her B.A. cum laude from Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, and her J.D. high honors from the University of Montana School of Law. Her research focuses on access to justice issues for residents of remote rural communities in Montana, with a particular focus on legal issues experienced by military veterans.</p>

SPEAKERS

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Ally Brown	<p>Ally maintains a general law practice, primarily focusing on the areas of health care litigation and regulations as well as family and veterans law. Ally received her Bachelor of Science in Political Science with a minor in Business Law from Southeast Missouri State University and graduated <i>cum laude</i> in 2015. Ally obtained her law degree from the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Law in 2019. During law school, she worked in the Mizzou Law Veterans Clinic where she helped veterans pursue discharge upgrades and disability benefits. She was recognized with the King Award for Excellence due to her hard work in the Veterans Clinic and compassion in veterans work. In 2019, her work was published in the Veterans Law Journal produced by the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. She has participated in the Harvard Law School Food Law Student Leadership Program which focuses on policy and legal issues surrounding farmers, food charities, and food regulations. Additionally, she spent time working in the Office of the General Counsel of the Department of Health and Human Services where she assisted in nursing home litigation and regulatory guidance.</p>
Kevin Hillman	<p>Kevin Hillman was appointed Associate Circuit Judge for Pulaski County, Missouri in the 25th Judicial Circuit by Governor Parson in November 2024, where he oversees multiple dockets including Drug, DWI, and Veterans' Treatment Courts. He holds a Bachelor of Arts from Centre College and a Juris Doctorate from the University of Cincinnati College of Law, and is licensed to practice law in Missouri and Ohio. Prior to his appointment, he served as Pulaski County's Prosecuting Attorney for fourteen years, having been first elected in November 2010 and reelected to three additional terms. He has also served as City Attorney for St. Robert, Municipal Judge for Waynesville, and held leadership roles with the Missouri Association of Prosecuting Attorneys and the Missouri Association of Treatment Court Professionals. Colonel Hillman is a Colonel in the Missouri Army National Guard with over twenty-eight years of commissioned service, currently assigned as the Staff Judge Advocate at Joint Forces Headquarters in Jefferson City. Before joining the Guard, he served five years on active duty at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, including as a Special Assistant United States Attorney. His operational assignments include a deployment to Kuwait as part of Operation Enduring Freedom, a mission to El Salvador for Operation Beyond the Horizon 2018, legal assignments in Stuttgart and Kaiserslautern, Germany, and a Subject Matter Expert Exchange with attorneys from Panama in 2025. Mr. Hillman lives in Waynesville, Missouri with his wife Allison and their two daughters, Abigail and Alyssa, both students at the University of Missouri-Columbia.</p>