

VETERAN ADVOCACY PROJECT



ANNUAL
REPORT
2023

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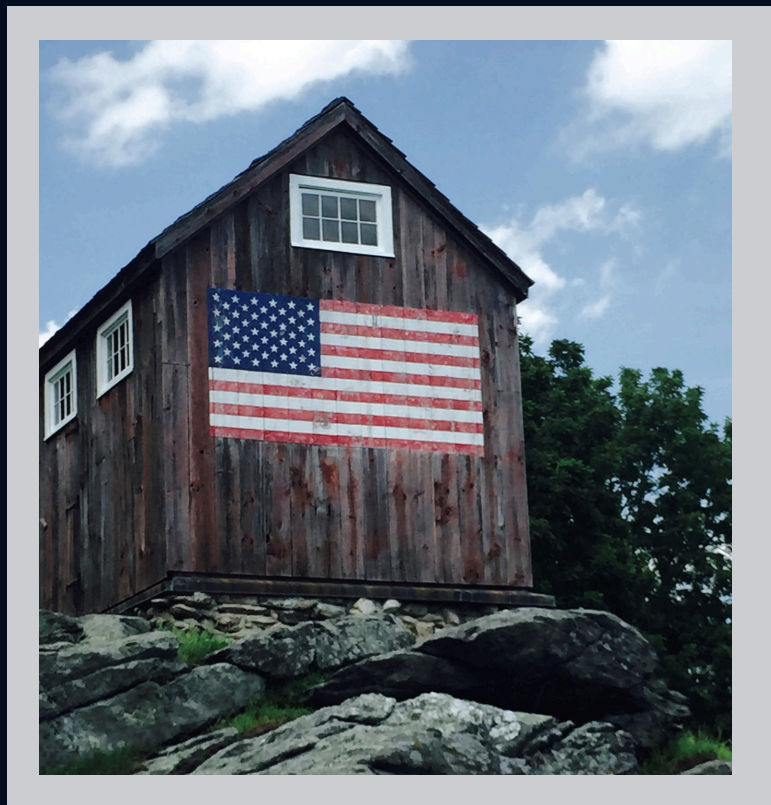
July 1, 2022
through
June 30, 2023

MISSION

The Veteran Advocacy Project (“VAP”) provides free legal services to low-income veterans and their families, with a focus on those living with post-traumatic stress disorder, brain injury, and substance dependency.

Our services provide access to health care and benefits, keep families in their homes, and empower veterans by removing barriers to success.

We are partnered with VA Vet Centers, community health clinics, and veterans’ organizations to reach individuals where they are, from a veteran treatment court to home. While our attorneys tackle the legal challenges, our advocates connect clients to culturally competent, trauma-informed resources.



VAP ensures veterans and their families achieve the stability needed to regain their health and rebuild their lives.

PROGRAMS & PARTNERS

VAP focuses on three practices: general civil legal services, Department of Veterans Affairs cases, and Department of Defense discharge upgrade & corrections applications. Our partnerships allow us to take a holistic approach to problem-solving for clients.

Practice Areas

Civil Legal Services for Vets

The attorneys in our Civil Practice provide general legal services: they represent vets & families in eviction proceedings, advise on child support modifications, and connect veterans to resources, including benefits & health care, employment training, and veteran-specific treatment programs.



VA Claims

Our Department of Veterans Affairs work centers around access to care and benefits, in addition to advocating for veterans in VA debt matters, education benefit denials, disability claims related to mental health, and character of discharge (COD) reviews for veterans barred from services.

Discharge Upgrades & Corrections

Our Department of Defense (DOD) team works on discharge upgrades & correction applications before DOD Review Boards. A less-than-honorable discharge is too often due to symptoms of mental health conditions that are treated as misconduct; or they are the result of systemic discrimination based on race, sexual orientation, and more. These discharges are the second highest predictor of homelessness, lead to a suicide rate more than double other veterans, and create barriers to employment in civilian life.



PROGRAMS & PARTNERS

Collaborations allow VAP to problem-solve; we focus on clients, not just legal matters.

We partner with social services agencies and health care providers to prevent homelessness and ensure veterans and their families can access the resources they need to thrive.

Our attorneys provide representation in eviction proceedings, advise on child support modifications, and advocate for veterans' discharge upgrades and VA benefits. Community Healthcare Network ensures clients receive primary and behavioral health care. Advocacy in collaboration with CHN social workers improves health outcomes by addressing social determinants of health. Counselors at VA Vet Centers provide vital therapeutic services and the resulting records often as the most important evidence in veterans law cases.

Our long-standing collaborations with Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) case managers at Jericho Project and Services for the Underserved keep families in their homes. This past year marked over a decade of partnership with Jericho!



CASES

The Year in Numbers:

1,799

CASES
WORKED ON

1,342

VETERAN
CLIENTS SERVED

155

NEW
DISCHARGE
CASES

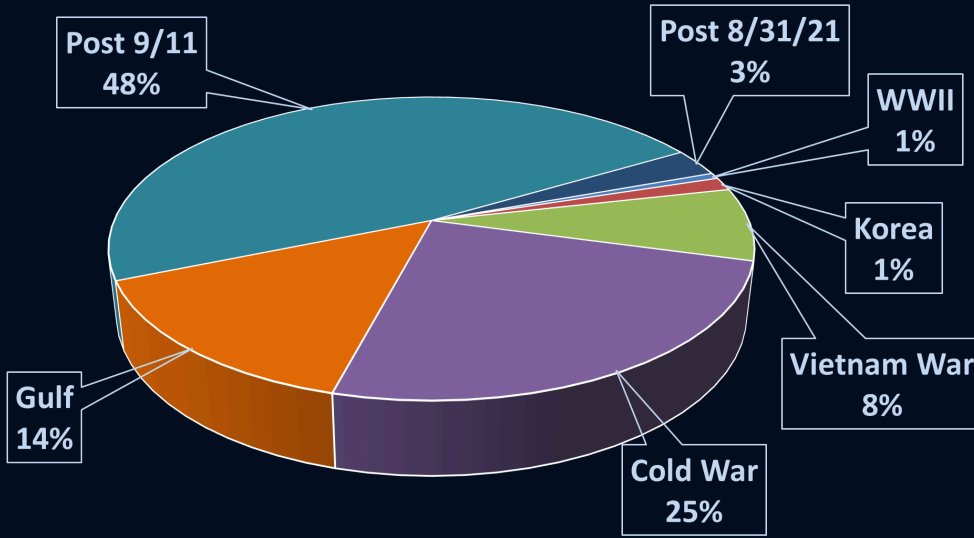
23

LAW FIRM &
PRO BONO
PARTNERS

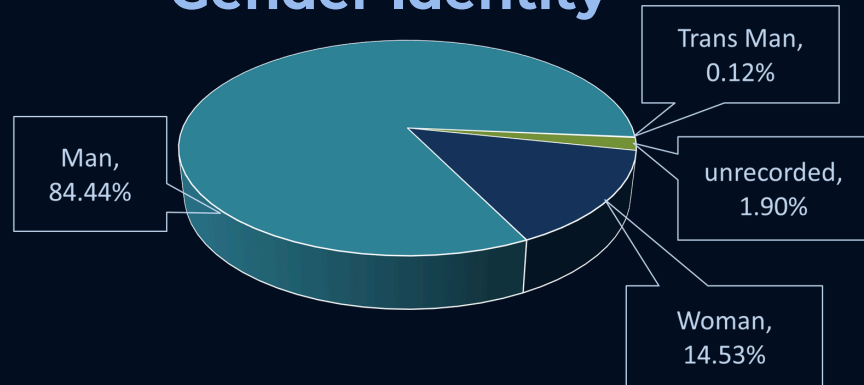


CLIENTS

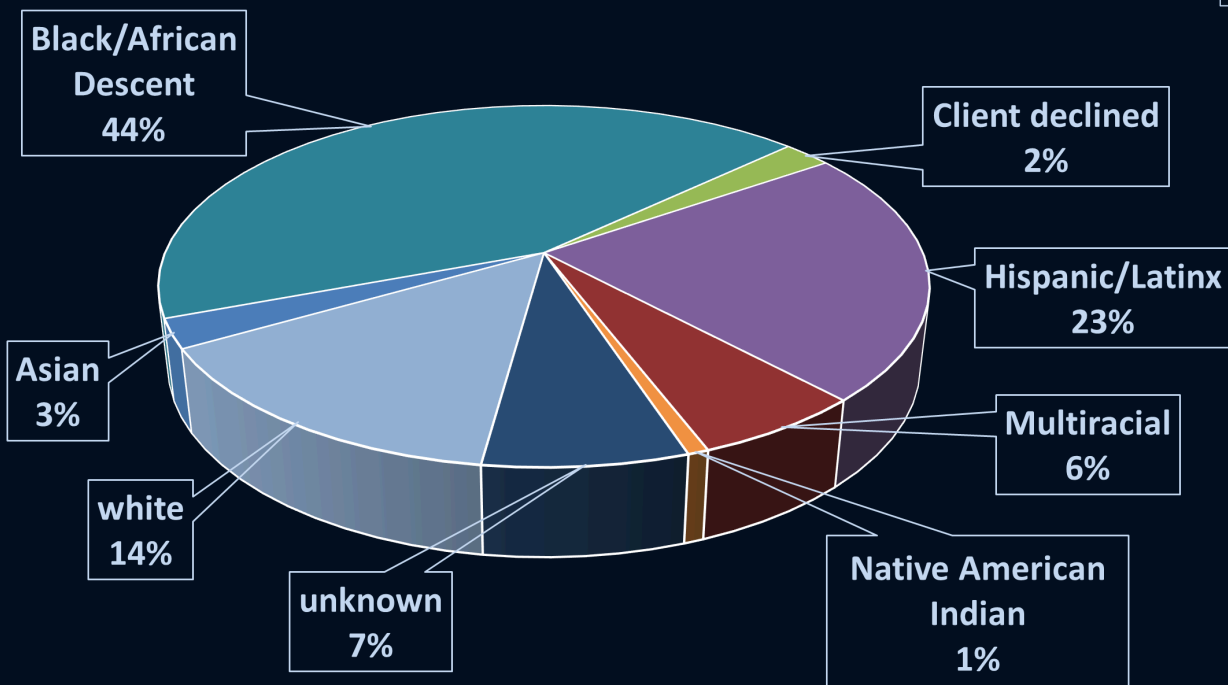
Service Era



Gender Identity



Race & Ethnicity



CLIENTS

ONE MARINE'S BATTLE AFTER VIETNAM

Mr. Douglas enlisted in the United States Marine Corps at just 17 years old. As the youngest of 9 kids, he was eager to make his family proud, following in the footsteps of his uncles and cousins.

Mr. Douglas deployed to Vietnam with the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines. They were instrumental in the Battle of Hue City in February 1968. Marine casualties totaled over 200 individuals. Mr. Douglas barely stayed alive at one point by throwing rocks to fend off the enemy. He survived those nights but brought them home from Vietnam with him. Like many servicemembers struggling with PTSD at the time, he turned to substances to numb himself. This led to being discharged with an Other Than Honorable characterization. The combination of PTSD from Vietnam and the shame he felt from his bad discharge was only compounded when he found that his discharge also barred him from VA health care and benefits. For five decades he struggled and continued to self-medicate.

The veteran came to VAP with a housing issue but we were also able to assist him in upgrading his discharge. Today, he has full access to the VA and receives treatment for his PTSD as he awaits his disability compensation claim--one that is fifty years overdue.



PRO BONO PARTNERS

Akin

Katten

Arnold & Porter

O'Melveny



CLEARY GOTTLIB



**Debevoise
& Plimpton**



SULLIVAN & CROMWELL LLP



SUSMAN GODFREY

EVENTS



In October 2022, Greenberg Traurig's The Meltones, six-time reigning champs of **Law Rocks'** annual Battle of the Bands in New York City, played for VAP and tied for an unprecedented seventh win. The evening supported many great causes and raised over \$50,000 for VAP alone!

In addition to this incredible support, Greenberg Traurig is one of our newest partners in the Discharge Upgrade Clinic, taking on **ten** veterans' cases in their first year.



GT GreenbergTraurig

EVENTS



Our executive director, Coco Culhane, caught up with VAP partners NYC Department of Veterans Services Commissioner James Hendon and the head of outreach for Columbia University's veterans programs, Matthew Ryba, at the *Admiral's Welcome*, kicking off Fleet Week aboard the *USS Intrepid* in NYC.



FREE LEGAL SERVICES
for VETERANS & FAMILY MEMBERS

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE'S COMMUNITY OFFICE
5827 Flatlands Ave.,
Brooklyn

You can use a computer in a private & quiet space to meet with a lawyer online.

Friday, April 14
10 AM – 2 PM
To make an appointment, please call:
718-241-9330

Legal Help & Resources for:

- HOUSING
- HEALTH CARE ACCESS
- FAMILY LAW
- PUBLIC BENEFITS
- MILITARY DISCHARGES
- VA CLAIMS

VETERAN ADVOCACY PROJECT

CITY COUNCIL MEMBER
MERCEDES NARCISSE
46th COUNCIL DISTRICT

VAP staff spent time getting outside the office, conducting outreach at Speaker Adams' Veterans Resource Fair in May; we started our Virtual Office Hours with Council Members across the city in an effort to help our small team continue to reach veterans and their families in their own neighborhood.



VAP SERVICE AWARDS

Honoring Michael Grohman for his service to others.

sponsored by:



SEPTEMBER 14, 2022

hosted by:

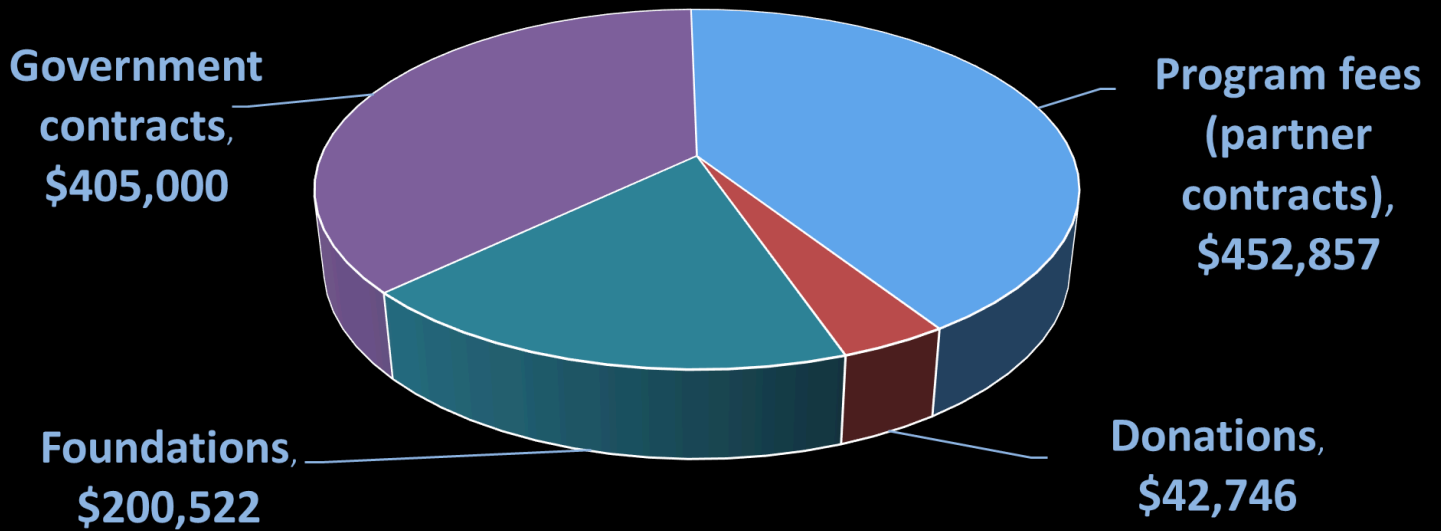


FINANCIALS

Fiscal Year 2023:

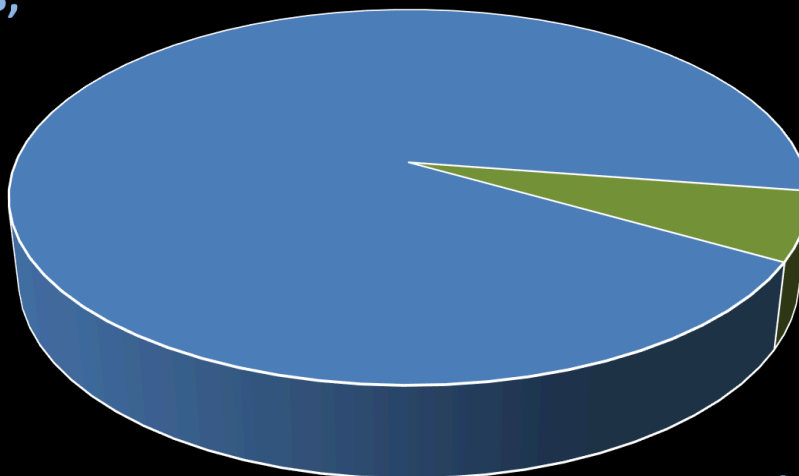
July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023

Revenue



Expense

Programs,
\$650,500



5.9%

The extremely low overhead cost at VAP means more direct services for veterans & their families.

Administrative,
\$40,694

SUPPORTERS

FY2023: 7/1/2022 - 6/20/2023

\$200,000+

City of New York,
Department of Veterans Services
Jericho Project

\$100,000 - \$199,999

City of New York,
New York City Council
Services for the UnderServed
Sozosei Foundation

\$50,000 - \$99,999

Law Rocks,
Greenberg Traurig's The Meltones
New York Community Trust
New York State,
Division of Veterans Services

\$10,000 - \$49,999

Community Healthcare Network
Orrick Herrington Sutcliffe Foundation

\$5,000 - \$9,999

Drexel Hamilton
Greenberg Traurig, LLP
Willie Wright

\$2,500 - \$4,999

Duane Morris, LLP
John S. Sensenbrenner

\$100 - \$2,499

GE Capital
David Carpenter, Home Depot
Kirsten Gillibrand
Melissa Hiler Fay
Stephen C. Lessard
Network for Good
Charles Stevens, Raytheon

\$1 - \$99

Patricia Corley
Sidney Covington
Michael D. Grohman
Courtenay Wood

OUR TEAM

STAFF

Amanda Agwuegbo
Advocate

Connie Cabrera
Advocate

Coco Culhane
Executive Director

Robin Emmanuelli
Senior Staff Attorney

Brent Filbert
Director, Military Law

Amy Hozer-Weber
Director, Civil Practice

Felicia Mullaney
Acting Director, VA Claims

Jarmeika Taylor
Staff Attorney

Katelyn Vaiana
Staff Attorney



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair
Melissa Hiler Fay
Drexel Hamilton

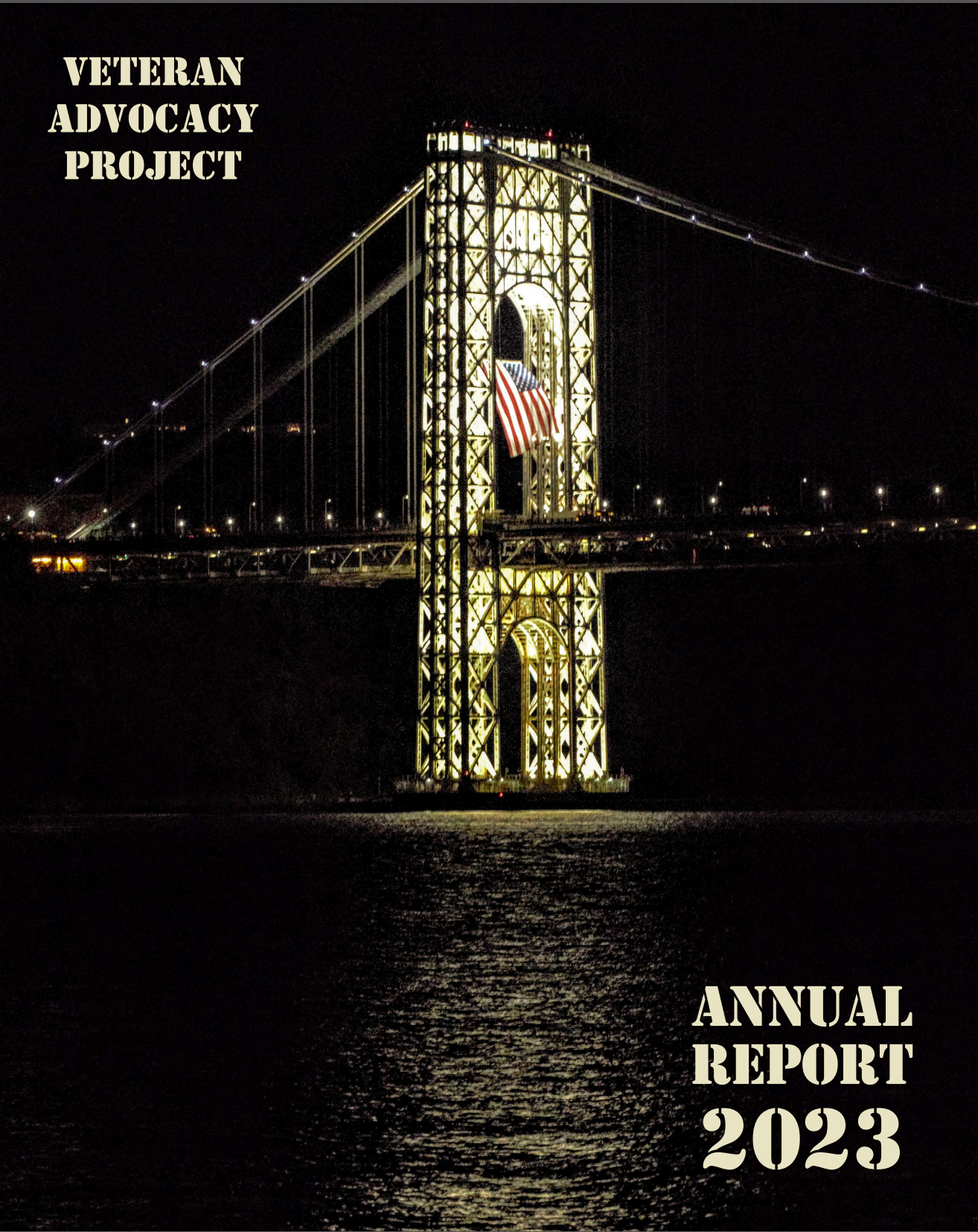
Secretary
Stephen C. Lessard
Latham & Watkins

Treasurer
Michael D. Grohman
Duane Morris

President & Executive Director
Coco Culhane
Veteran Advocacy Project

Director
Sidney Covington
AmeriVet Securities

Director
Willie Wright
GE Capital



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veteranadvocacy.org