The V-News!

VOLUME II | ISSUE 2 *THE V-LAW GROUP'S NEWSLETTER* MAY 2026

WELCOME TO OUR

Quarterly Newsletter

Message from the Managing Attorney

Greetings! Welcome to another edition of the V-News! As with every issue, we are delighted to share news and updates about the V-Law Group, as well as news and updates in the legal community. In this issue, we will cover news and updates from the first quarter of the year (January - April 2026).

On that note, it gves me great joy and an immense sense of pride and achievement, as it has been one year since our return. Also, in April, the V-Law Group, PLLC celebrated another anniversary of its existence, and in the spirit of our 14-year anniversary, we finally expanded our practice to the State of Maryland. On that note, we are pleased to inform you that we now have a second location in Largo, Maryland (see details on page 2). Also in the month of April, we retained our first *pro bono* client, via the D.C. Bar Bankruptcy Clinic, as we continue to expand our services in Bankruptcy law.

With every issue, we always endeavor to feature an attorney from our legal network. In this issue we feature two! First, for our attorney spotlight, we feature John L-R Poindexter, Esq., from the Poindexter Law Firm. Then, for our community impact news, we shift the spotlight to the Law Office of Christopher H. Dorn, PLLC, in a feature article, "Building a Law Practice with Pro Bono." Looking forward, please stay tuned for our next and final issue for the year, in September 2026 (Volume II, Issue 3), with more news and updates on the legal landscape!

~Vanessa-Nola Pratt, Esq.

IN THIS ISSUE

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In the News: Updates in Immigration Law!

The following information is not intended, and may not be construed as legal advice. The objective of this article is to educate, inform, and/or update our audience about current news and events in immigration law. Thus, in light of these updates, please consult with an immigration lawyer.

The new year began with a new quarter and a continuation of a number of developments spilling over from the last quarter of 2025. In other words, the first quarter of this year (i.e. January - April 2026) is essentially a continuation of a number of updates we reported from the last quarter/end of the year (i.e. September - December 2025). For example, we reported that in September 2025, the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit ("Fifth Circuit"), in *W.M.M v. Donald J. Trump*, No. 25-10534 (5th Cir. 2025), issued a preliminary injunction that blocked the Trump Administration from using the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 to deport Venezuelan nationals. In turn, the Trump Administration filed a petition for an en banc rehearing, and in October 2025, the Fifth Circuit granted the Trump Administration's petition for an *en banc* rehearing and scheduled it for January 2026. Accordingly, the Fifth Circuit heard *en banc*, oral arguments on January 22, 2026. A decision still remains pending, however, so please stay tuned for additional details.

More so, in January 2026, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention numbers attained an all-time record high of more than 70,700 arrests in the agency's 23-year history. On January 21, 2026, the "travel ban" expansion, which the Trump Administration announced in December 2025 (and which we reported in the last issue), became effective. Thus, on this date, the processing of immigrant visas (i.e. green card applications) for nationals of 75 designated countries were suspended. This ban, however, does not apply to non-immigrant visas, such as, for example, B1 (tourist/visitor's visa) or F1/J1 (student/work study visas). Additionally, DHS announced its intent to terminate temporary protected status ("TPS") for Somali Nationals.

February 2026 was characterized by a plethora of immigration updates. Among numerous updates, Department of Homeland Security ("DHS") issued a "Notice of Proposed Rulemaking", proposing to change filing and eligibility requirements for immigrants who are seeking employment authorization and/or an employment authorization document ("EAD"), due to a pending asylum application. These proposed changes include, pausing the acceptance of EAD applications from asylum applicants during periods when the processing time for affirmative

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asylum applications exceed 180 days; extending the waiting period to apply for employment authorization to 365 days; changing EAD application processing time requirements; and adding eligibility requirements.

On February 25, 2026, a judge from the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts, in *D.V.D., et al. v. United States Department of Homeland Security, et al.*, No. 1:25-cv-10676, issued a ruling on a class-action suit by immigration plaintiffs who challenged a March 2025 DHS directive that allowed ICE to deport non-citizens to a third country. In an eighty-one page decision, the judge struck down ICE's policy of rapidly deporting immigrants to a third country, other than the deportee's home country, even if the deportee had no ties to that country, without any prior notice or opportunity for the deportee to object or raise safety concerns. However, the judge found that this policy was unlawful, and that it violated immigration law and due process. Of course, DHS appealed this decision with the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit ("First Circuit"). In turn, the First Circuit scheduled this appeal for oral arguments in May 2026. As this case is pending, we will provide all pertinent updates on the outcome of this case when it becomes available, so please stay tuned!

Also in February, DHS announced the termination of TPS for Yemeni Nationals, thereby leaving Yemeni Nationals without any other legal status but a mere sixty-day window to voluntarily depart the United States. Additional developments, however, would ensue during the next quarter (details to follow in the September 2026 issue).

More so, and as we reported in the last issue, DHS announced the termination of TPS for Haitian Nationals, which was scheduled to take effect in February 2026. However, in February, a District of Columbia (D.C.) District Court judge issued an emergency order, blocking the termination of TPS for Haitians. Yet still, a final adjudication of this matter is far from over.

In March 2026, after DHS filed an appeal of the D.C. District Court's decision, seeking an emergency stay, the United States Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit upheld the TPS protections for approximately 350,000 Haitian immigrants. Therefore, DHS appealed this decision with the United States Supreme Court. During this same month, the Supreme Court granted a writ of certiorari for this case, as well as an appeal of a halt to the termination of TPS for Syrian Nationals (i.e. the Court agreed to consider

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arguments related to TPS for Haitian and Syrian Nationals.). Meanwhile, the termination of TPS for Somali Nationals was scheduled to take effect on March 17, 2026. Merely a few days earlier, however, on March 13, 2026, a judge from the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts halted the expiration of TPS for Somalians, which automatically extended beneficiaries' work authorization and legal protections. *See African Communities Together, et al. v. Noem, et al.*, No. 1:26-cv-11201. Then, at the end of March, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services ("USCIS") resumed adjudicating affirmative asylum applications for applicants who are not from travel ban countries, after it briefly paused the processing of applications in November 2025.

On April 1, 2026, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments on the highly controversial issue of birth right citizenship for U.S. born children of undocumented or visiting immigrant parents. As it has not yet rendered a decision on this case, further details and updates on the outcome of this case are pending, so please stay tuned. Also, on April 24, 2026, a three-judge panel from the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, in *Raices v. Noem*, No. 25-5243, blocked Donald Trump's executive order, which suspended asylum access into the southern boarder of the United States. In this 2-1 decision, the Court found that the Immigration & Nationality Act guarantees individuals the right to apply for asylum at the United States border.

In summary, the first quarter of the year can be best described as a period of a litany of legal challenges, hearings, and adjudication of controversial immigration policies, which for the most part, have brought some sense of relief for many immigrants. While most of these immigration issues remain pending, as DHS continues to challenge and appeal these court decisions that have struck down its immigration policies, there is still a glimmer of hope that these requisite due process safeguards for immigrants shall remain intact.

Of course, the above-mentinoed updates are not an exhaustive list of all immigration news and updates from the period of January to April 2026. Rather, these updates are highlights of the latest developments in immigration news. Please continue to stay tuned, as we continue to provide you with additional updates in our next, September 2026 issue.

Developments in Veterans Law: Rescission of the Interim Final Rule - "Evaluative Rating: Impact of Medication"

The following information is not intended, and may not be construed as legal advice. The objective of this article is to educate, inform, and/or update our audience about current news and events in veterans law. Thus, in light of these updates, please consult with a veterans/disability benefits attorney.

At the V-Law Group, PLLC, we honor our commitment to serving our Nation's Veterans, with extreme gratitude for their Service. As one of many ways in which we serve our Veterans, we have undertaken a duty to keep our Veterans apprised and informed about developments in veterans law, which may impact their eligibility for veterans' benefits. As it has been a while since we provided updates in veterans law, we shall accordingly discuss some significant developments in veterans' disability benefits from last quarter (i.e. the first quarter of the year, January - April 2026).

The year began on an extremely positive note for veterans' disability claims. During the first quarter of the year, on February 17, 2026, the Department of Veterans Affairs ("VA") initially issued an interim final rule, "Evaluative Rating: Impact of Medication", which was designed to abrogate (i.e. cancel) the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims' ("CAVC") decision in *Ingram v. Collins*, 38 Vet. App. 130 (2025). Effective February 27, 2026, however, VA rescinded this interim final rule. Concomitantly, VA decided not to continue its appeal of the *Ingram* decision with the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit ("Federal Circuit"). In this regard, we will undertake a review and analysis of these updates to explain the significance and reasons why these developments in veterans law are pertinent to disability ratings for some service-connected disabilities.

BACKGROUND: As noted above, the precedential case law that is pertinent to understanding the significance and impact of the recission of the interim final rule, "Evaluative Rating: Impact of Medication", is *Ingram v. Collins*, 38 Vet. App. 130 (2025). A breakdown and discussion of this case is pertinent to a full comprehension of the impact of the aftermath of this precedential decision.

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Ingram v. Collins, 38 Vet. App. 130 (2025)

Carlton H. Ingram ("Veteran"), appealed a decision from the Board of Veterans' Appeals ("Board"), which, in pertinent part, denied his claims for: an increased rating, in excess of 20 percent, for a service-connected back disability; and an increased rating, in excess of 10 percent, for a service-connected left ankle disability. In denying these claims, the Board relied on a VA medical examination, which indicated that the severity of his symptoms were alleviated, though not eliminated, by medication.

In March 2025, on appeal, CAVC vacated the part of the appeal that denied the Veteran's increased rating claims for his back and left ankle disabilities. As the basis for its decision, the Court relied, in part, on the holding in a precedential CAVC decision, *Jones v. Shinseki*, 26 Vet. App. 56 (2012), which requires the Board to discount beneficial medication effects when relevant rating criteria do not specifically contemplate medication use. The Court explained, in pertinent part, that the general formula rating that was applicable to the Veteran's back and left ankle disabilities is based on an assessment of the limitation of motion caused by the disabilities, and that the general rating criteria do not reference medication. Citing *Jones* and *McCarroll v. McDonald*, 28 Vet. App. 267 (2016), the Court further explained that the Board was obligated to discount the beneficial effects of the medication the Veteran took for each disability and evaluate the baseline severity of those disabilities.

In this regard, CAVC held that VA cannot reduce a disability rating based on the "ameliorative" (i.e. pain relief) effects of medication, where applicable diagnostic codes and special musculoskeletal regulations do not reference medication.

AFTERMATH: After this d*ecision*, VA filed an appeal with the Federal Circuit, in July 2025. While this appeal was pending, VA issued an interim final rule, "Evaluative Rating: Impact of Medicine", effective February 17, 2026, for the purpose of repealing CAVC's decision in *Ingram*. Due to intense, signficant backlash from the public, including major advocacy groups and Veteran Service Organizations, VA issued a rescission of this interim final rule, effective February 27, 2026. Then, in March 2026, VA withdrew its appeal, and accordingly, the Federal Circuit dismissed the appeal, thereby making CAVC's decision final and binding. What this means is that VA can no longer use the benefits of medication to discount the functional impairment and/or the severity of a disability when the rating criteria for that disability does not contemplate the use of medication.

Q&A Errata Clarification

In the last issue of the V-News!, we discovered an error in the Q & A segment. Thus, in this issue we shall provide a clarification of the following question:

Q: "If i remain silent, will that be a strike against me?"

Original Response: "In the context of custodial interrogation (i.e. when someone is in police custody), no. Under these circumstances, remaining silent cannot be a strike against you because this would be a violation of your Fifth Amendment Rights of the U.S. Constitution. The right to remain silent is the touchstone of your Constitutional Right against self-incrimination, as well as your right to be represented by counsel. In *Salinas v. Texas*, 570 U.S. 178 (2013), however, the United States Supreme Court clarified that you cannot automatically invoke the right to remain silent by simply remaining silent. Rather you must ***clearly*** invoke this right before you can be afforded the Fifth Amendment's protection against self-incrimination. Here is simple mathematics for you to remember:

Custody + Interrogation = CLEARLY
Expressing Your Right to Remain Silent!"

~Q & A Session With The V-Law Group,
The V-News! Volume II, Issue 1, January 2026, p. 7

Clarification: Typically, when in police custody, your right to remain silent cannot be used against you. However, exceptions apply. So this is not a hard and fast rule. The United States Supreme Court, in *Salinas v. Texas*, 570 U.S. 178 (2013), essentially clarified that your right to remain silent is not absolute or presumed. Rather you must ***clearly*** invoke your right to remain silent. So, the right to remain silent *cannot* be counted as a strike against you when you *clearly* communicate this right.

Do you have any additional questions for us?
We would love to hear from you. Please e-mail your questions to info@v-lawgroup.com.

Attorney Spotlight: John L-R. Poindexter, Esq.

John L-R Poindexter is a proud native of Surry County, Virginia, where he was born and raised. He attended the University of Virginia, earning a Bachelor's degree in Eastern European History before entering military service. After a brief stint in the military, he attended Howard University School of Law and graduated in May 2001.

Following law school, John returned to military service and is a decorated and proud veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom III. His military service continues to shape the discipline, commitment, and work ethic he brings to the practice of law today.

John currently resides in Washington, D.C. with his two children, John John and Elle. His practice focuses on civil litigation, employment law, criminal defense, and probate matters.

Outside of the courtroom, John enjoys hands-on work, including home improvement projects and motorcycle restoration. Above all else, however, he treasures the time he spends with his children, who remain the center of his life.

For additional inquiries, or for a case consultation on the above-mentioned practice areas in Washington D.C., please contact the Poindexter Law Firm at:

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Community Impact Spotlight: "Building a Law Practice with Pro Bono"

by Christopher H. Dorn, Esq.

On November 1, 2025, I launched my solo practice, the Law Office of Christopher H. Dorn PLLC, after completing the DC Bar's Practice Management Advisory program for solo and small practices. This remarkable offering included Basic Training & Beyond and Managing Money (fee agreements and trust accounting), which I supplemented with the Avoiding Malpractice CLE and other courses, bringing alive the internal plumbing of law firm operations they never teach in law school. Many thanks to DC Bar staff Dan Mills and Kaitlin McGee for giving me support to launch my practice.

Because all my prior work had been in large organizations, I needed a way to shift gears to individual and small business clients.I concluded Pro Bono work provided the best opportunity to establish a track record and capture referrals, building a book of business appropriate for a solo practice. I signed up for wide range of pro bono opportunities:

- The monthly DC Bar Advice & Referral Clinics exposed me to plaintiff-side employment, EEOC, and consumer law;
- ·The Chapter 7 Access to Justice Clinic was my reward for going through the DC Bar's specialized bankruptcy training;
- The Federal Workers Legal Defense Network provided consultations in federal employment law and trainings in the specialized field of U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) appeals;
- The Washington Lawyers for the Arts Angel Attorney program provided opportunities to help artists and performers with corporate and contract law issues; and
- The DC Bar's Small Business Clinic applied my corporate law background to the needs of entrepreneurs who are moving fast and breaking things.

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Newly returned to DC after a government career abroad, the camaraderie of pro bono clinics allowed me to quickly build a network of colleagues from firms of all sizes and specialties. Consultations led to pro bono engagements, and a track record with engagements led to paying clients. By the six-month mark May 1, I found myself with a full docket, with five full representation pro bono matters, including advising a nonprofit board of directors, working through Chapter 7 consumer bankruptcy cases, and representing federal employees in MSPB appeals. As I now blend in paying clients, my biggest challenge is limiting intake to maintain a stable workload while establishing a referral network to send out overflow. I thank the DC Bar's Practice Management Advisory Service for making my career pivot a reality.

Chris graduated from Columbia Law School and is admitted in DC and NY. He can be reached at christopher.dorn@chdornlawoffice.com or on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/dornch