



The V-News!

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THE V-LAW GROUP'S NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2026

WELCOME TO OUR *Quarterly Newsletter*

Message from the Managing Attorney



Hello! Welcome to another edition of *the V-News*! In this, our third and final issue for 2026, we are delighted at another opportunity to continue sharing news and updates about the V-Law Group and the legal community. In this regard, we shall cover news and updates, especially from the second quarter of the year (May - August 2026). So, in no particular order, here are your quarterly updates!

Since our last issue, I am excited to announce that I have reinstated my Veterans Affairs (VA) accreditation. What this means is that as a VA Accredited Attorney, I am authorized to represent our Nation's Veterans for their claims for VA benefits and/or appeals. With more than 13 years of experience with veterans law, I am extremely well versed and passionate about this area of law. On the subject, actually, we are excited to provide some helpful resources for Veterans in this very issue by providing: (1) Recent updates in veterans law; and (2) An introduction to a unique veterans service program that is an excellent resource for Veterans who are in need of representation, among other functions of this program (featured in our quarterly community impact news).

Per usual, and as with every issue, we shall also provide immigration updates from last quarter (i.e. the second quarter of the year). Finally, as we always endeavor to feature an attorney from our legal network, and since I always get requests and referrals for a traffic court attorney, we shall feature Attorney Jeron Hayes, Jr., for this issue's attorney spotlight. Thanks for reading. Cheers!

~ Vanessa-Nola Pratt, Esq.

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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.

In the second quarter of the year (May to August 2026), legal challenges to immigration policies and updates would continue, and the Trump Administration continued to inundate us with numerous updates in immigration law. Given the plethora of updates, we will discuss a select few updates to keep you apprised and updated with last quarter's developments in immigration law. As a matter of fact, for various legal challenges, last quarter served as a continuation and/or update of immigration updates from the first quarter of the year (January - April 2026). Lets begin!

In May 2026, United States Citizenship & Immigration Services ("USCIS") announced that effective May 18, 2026, it would no longer permit attorneys and accredited representatives to attend interviews remotely at field offices, in affirmative asylum cases and Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act ("NACARA") Section 203 interviews at asylum offices, except in limited circumstances. Therefore, attorneys are now required to be physically present at these interviews.

Also during the month of May, Temporary Protected Status ("TPS") was extended for Lebanese Nationals. In this regard, the Trump

Administration extended deportation protections and work permits for Lebanese Nationals.



In June 2026, however, the United States Supreme Court, in *Miot v. Trump*, consolidated with the case, *Mullin v. Doe*, reversed the decision of the lower courts and permitted the Trump administration to terminate Temporary Protected Status ("TPS") for Haitian and Syrian Nationals.

Crucially, and also in June 2026, the United States Supreme Court, in *Trump v. Barbara*, struck down Donald Trump's executive order, which attempted to deny U.S. Citizenship to children born in the U.S., to parents who lack permanent legal status.

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Also during the month of June, the United States District Court for Rhode Island (R.I. District Court), in *Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island, et al. v. USCIS*, set aside four internal policy memoranda which froze or restricted processing applications for asylum, green cards, work permits, and naturalization applications. Days later, the R.I. District Court issued a second, final, clarifying order, stating that the above-mentioned policies are unlawful under the Administrative Procedures Act (APA). While USCIS announced that it was implementing the court's order, at the same time, it immediately filed an appeal with the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit ("First Circuit").

These above-mentioned cases are merely a few samples of a significant number of cases that federal courts (including and not limited to the U.S. Supreme Court) considered and decided in June 2026.

By the end of June 2026, there was a significant surge in Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE") arrests. Specifically, for example, ICE arrested more than 10,000 people, over a five day period, at the end of June. By July 2026, the number of detainees in ICE custody was at least 65,000.

Additionally, in July 2026, the Department of Homeland Security ("DHS") issued an interim final rule, effective July 28, 2026, announcing that it is amending its regulations to permit USCIS to refer certain affirmative asylum applications to immigration court, without providing an

an applicant with an asylum interview.

As the legal challenges to immigration policies continued in the month of July, the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts, in *Venezuelan Association of Massachusetts et al. v. United States Citizens and Immigration Services*, among other issues, halted the immediate rejection of asylum applications, termination of work authorizations, and initiation of removal proceedings that were solely due to a nonpayment of the retroactive annual asylum fee (AAF). At the same time, however, the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts permitted USCIS to continue collecting the AAF, among other fee provisions or requirements.

In July, as well, DHS issued a final rule in which it rescinded its 2022 "public charge" regulations. As the bases for this rescission, DHS reasoned that the 2022 Final Rule was "inconsistent with congressional intent, unduly restrictive, and hampered with DHS's ability to make accurate, precise, and reliable determinations of whether" certain immigrants are likely, at any time, to become a public charge. DHS further clarifies that the rescission shall restore broader discretion for DHS officers to evaluate all pertinent facts; and that it aligns with long-standing policy that immigrants in the United States should rely on themselves, whereas government benefits should not incentivize immigration.

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July 2026 also brought an announcement from DHS regarding major changes to F, J, and I nonimmigrant status. Particularly, DHS published a final rule announcing that it is amending its regulations to change the admission period in the F, J, and I visa classifications, from an admission for “duration of status” to an admission for “a fixed period of time”, with additional changes to admission and extension requirements. DHS, however, clarified that this “rule has been classified as a major rule subject to congressional review.”



In *Venezuelan Association of Massachusetts*, as litigation continued into August 2026 (from July 2026), in which the U.S. District Court of Massachusetts enjoined the April 2026 interim final rule from implementing consequences for a failure to pay the annual asylum fee (“AAF”), USCIS announced that it would permit asylum applicants, who missed their payment due date, to pay the AAF until the Court makes a final decision in this case. Therefore, it reopened its payment portal to these applicants.

During this same month of August, the First Circuit issued a partial stay on R.I. District

Court’s ruling from its June 2026 decision in *Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island* (i.e. the First Circuit Court paused or halted part of R.I. District Court’s June 2026 decision). Specifically, the First Circuit permitted USCIS to re-review certain approved immigration benefits, while other processing freezes remain blocked. This case, however, remains pending before the First Circuit.

Throughout the entire year, there has been a lot of back and forth regarding TPS status for various countries. We saw numerous legal challenges to TPS status and federal courts issuing a stay for certain countries, but only for the United States Supreme Court, as the final say and authority over this issue, to lift (or remove) the stay (i.e. the pause). With that being said, TPS ended or took effect for five countries in August 2026. They include: Haiti (effective August 4, 2026), South Sudan (effective August 7, 2026); Burma/Myanmar (effective August 7, 2026); Somalia (effective August 14, 2026); and Ethiopia (effective August 18, 2026).

The second quarter of the year (May – August 2026) was characterized by a substantial amount of developments in immigration law. Possibly the most significant one, which everyone is aware of, is the Supreme Court’s decision on birth right citizenship. Additionally, there were a few other developments that also signified a win for immigrants. It is a reassurance and reaffirmation that there is hope for better immigration policies.

Developments in Veterans Law:

Adams v. Collins

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 updates in veterans law. Thus, for additional information, please consult with a VA Accredited attorney or representative, or please feel free to contact us at infoev-lawgroup.com.

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 apprise our Veterans of developments in veterans law, which may impact their eligibility for veterans' benefits. In this issue, our discussion of recent updates in veterans law is based on a court case from the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims ("CAVC") from last quarter, in *Adams v. Collins*, No. 23-5064 (Vet. App. 2025).

In May 2026, a change in veterans law resulted from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' ("VA") decision not to appeal *Adams v. Collins* with the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit ("Federal Circuit"). In this issue, we shall discuss and explain the significance and reasons why this recent development is a major win for claimants and/or veterans.

Adams v. Collins, No. 23-5064 ***(Vet. App. 2025)***

Adams v. Collins is significant landmark case that CAVC decided in July 2025. Millard Adams ("Veteran") appealed a decision from the Board of Veterans Appeals ("Board"), which denied his service connection claim for obesity, as secondary (i.e. due to or aggravated by) to his service-connected post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (also known as a claim for secondary service connection for obesity).

In denying this secondary service connection claim for obesity, the Board relied on VA's General Counsel (GC) Precedential Opinion, VAOPGCPREC 1-2017, which indicates that "obesity per se is not a disease or injury for purposes of 38 U.S.C. §§ 1110 and 1131 and

therefore may not be service connected on direct basis or secondary basis." The Board further reasoned that the record did not show that the Veteran's obesity functionally impaired earning capacity, and that even though the Veteran was obese, his obesity is not considered a disease or injury.



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On appeal, CAVC struck down this well-settled, longstanding VA policy that obesity is not a disease for purposes of secondary service connection claims. Specifically, CAVC held that the GC's finding that obesity is not a "disease", for purposes of secondary service "is an impermissible interpretation of the statute."

In pertinent part, CAVC explained that case law precedent, *Saunders v. Wilkie*, 886 F.3d 1356 (Fed. Cir. 2018), *rev'g Saunders v. McDonald*, No.15-0975, 2016 WL 3002862 (Vet. App. May 25, 2016)(mem. dec.), *aff'd*, 2016 WL 4258493 (Vet. App. Aug.12, 2016) (affirmed by a three-judge panel), holds that a "disability", within the context of 38 U.S.C. § 1110, means "functional impairment of earning capacity." CAVC further explained that *Saunders* cited 38 U.S.C. § 1155's definition of "disability" as "an average impairment of earning capacity", which serves as an indication that VA's regulations support its definition of "disability" referring to "functional impairment." In this regard, CAVC acknowledged that in the GC's opinion, its definition of "disability" is consistent with *Saunders*, and thus a permissible interpretation.

The Court additionally held that obesity may be a disability for the purpose of §1110 if it results in the functional impairment of earning capacity (citing *Saunders*); and that determining whether a claimant's obesity causes functional impairment requires an "individualized assessment" of the "degree

of impairment" caused by a claimant's obesity (citing *Wait v. Wilkie*, 33 Vet. App. 8, 16 (2020)).

Why is Adams a landmark case? Prior to this decision, a veteran was not entitled to direct or secondary service connection for obesity. Rather, a veteran was only entitled to service connection for obesity as an "intermediate step." Specifically, for example, if a veteran had a service-connected disability (e.g. PTSD) that caused obesity, and in turn, the obesity caused another secondary disability (e.g. obstructive sleep apnea), then a veteran would be entitled to service connection for obesity, as an "intermediate step" (i.e. a bridge between the service-connected PTSD disability and the obstructive seelp apnea disability). Post *Adams*, and after VA decided not to appeal CAVC's decision in May 2026, this decision became final and consequently, a veteran may now be entitled to secondary service connection for obesity, as long as the criteria for secondary service connection are established.

Attorney Spotlight: Jeron Hayes, Esq.



Meet Attorney Jeron Hayes, Jr.! He is dedicated to protecting the rights of accident victims and helping them secure the compensation they deserve. Jeron is licensed to practice law in Maryland and Washington, D.C. He earned his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from North Carolina Central University and his Juris Doctor from Charlotte School of Law.

Jeron served as a prosecutor in both Maryland and Washington, D.C., where he gained extensive trial experience and developed strong litigation skills. In those roles, he demonstrated leadership, integrity, and a deep commitment to public service and protecting the community. Jeron also worked as an eDiscovery Attorney, where he reviewed documents for relevance, confidentiality, and privilege in complex civil litigation matters.

Earlier in his career, Jeron clerked for the Honorable Karen H. Mason, Associate Judge on the Circuit Court for Prince George's County, Maryland. That experience gave him valuable insight into judicial decision-making and courtroom practice—knowledge he now applies to his work on behalf of personal injury clients. Throughout his career, Jeron has remained passionate about advocacy and he is committed to providing his clients with strong, compassionate, and effective legal representation.

Specifically, his areas of practice include personal injury, criminal defense, and traffic matters, in the District of Columbia and Maryland.

Prospective clients may contact Attorney Hayes at 301-679-6321 ext. 1, and ask for Jeron; or email him directly at J.hayes@conbaylaw.com.

Community Impact Spotlight

This quarter, we are shining the community impact spotlight on:



The Veterans Consortium

PRO BONO PROGRAM®

The Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program ("TVC") is a national pro bono legal program dedicated to ensuring that veterans and their families are provided with meaningful access to legal representation, especially with respect to an appeal of veterans' benefits. It was established in 1992, in response to the large number of *pro se* (i.e. unrepresented) veterans who appealed their benefits claims before the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC).

In 1991, CAVC asked Congress to reallocate part of its budget to secure representation for veterans and/or claimants who were in need of representation. Consequently, in 1992, a consortium of four veterans service organizations (the American Legion; Disabled American Veterans; National Veterans Legal Services Program; and Paralyzed Veterans of America) were awarded a grant to create and operate TVC.

TVC's core mission is to identify veterans who need legal representation; recruit and train volunteer attorneys; and connect eligible veterans with attorneys who may render *pro bono* representation. Pertinently, TVC provides these volunteer attorneys with training in veterans law and representation before CAVC, and additionally, it provides ongoing support and mentorship throughout the case.

A significant component of the program is its case-evaluation and placement process. Cases involving unrepresented veterans who are appealing a decision from the Board of Veterans' Appeals ("Board") are screened to determine whether they qualify for *pro bono* representation. Then, qualified veterans are paired with a trained volunteer attorney. This allows veterans, who otherwise might have to navigate complicated appellate proceedings on their own, to obtain professional legal assistance.

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The TVC program also serves as an important training and mentorship component for attorneys. Volunteer attorneys receive specialized training in veterans law and they are provided with guidance by experienced veterans law practitioners, while they concomitantly develop and/or hone appellate skills.

TVC is particularly known for its work before CAVC, and it has expanded its *pro bono* activities to include legal clinics that assist veterans with other legal issues, such as, for example, housing, employment, family, and/or consumer law matters. These clinics are operated virtually or in partnership with VA facilities, law firms, law schools, and/or various other organizations.

In summary, TVC serves in two capacities. (1) It provides qualified veterans with access to qualified legal representation; and at the same time, (2) It provides support, mentorship and training to volunteer attorneys who render *pro bono* representation to veterans. Therefore, TVC functions both as a resource for direct legal-services program for veterans; and as an excellent source of training and mentorship for attorneys who are interested in veterans law.

*For additional information about the Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program, visit:
<https://www.vetsprobono.org/>*