Presentation to the Section of Labor & Employment Law
American Bar Association
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Samuel F. Wright is the Director of the Service Members Law Center (SMLC) at the Reserve Officers Association (ROA). ROA is a veterans’ organization, under section 501(c)(19) of the Internal Revenue Code. It was founded in 1922 by a group of veterans of the “Great War” as World War I was then known, including Captain Harry S. Truman. As President, in 1950, he signed ROA’s congressional charter. Under the charter, ROA’s mission is to support the development and execution of national policies that will provide adequate national defense. ROA has more than 53,000 members, most of whom are Reserve Component officers of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. In 2013, ROA members amended the ROA Constitution, making noncommissioned officers eligible for ROA membership for the first time.

In 1997, ROA established the “Law Review” column in its magazine and later on its website. We invite your attention to www.servicemembers-lawcenter.org. You will find more than 1,100 articles about the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA), the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA), and other laws that are especially pertinent to those who serve our country in uniform. You will also find a detailed Subject Index and a search function, to facilitate finding articles about very specific topics. ROA adds new articles to the website each week, including 169 new articles added in 2013.

On June 1, 2009, ROA established the SMLC, to assist service members with legal issues related to their military service, especially service in the Reserve Components. In 2013, Samuel F. Wright (as SMLC Director) received and responded to 9,193 inquiries (766 per month on average) from service members, military family members, attorneys, employers, union officials, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) volunteers, Department of Labor (DOL) investigators, congressional staffers, state legislators, reporters, and others. Almost half of the inquiries were about USERRA, and the other half were about everything you can think of that has something to do with military service and law. The SMLC
provides information to service members, without regard to whether they are members of or eligible to join ROA.

As SMLC Director, Samuel F. Wright is at his post at ROA headquarters, answering e-mails and telephone calls, during regular business hours Monday-Friday and until 10 pm Eastern Time on Mondays and Thursdays. The point of the evening availability is to make it possible for Reserve Component service members to contact us by telephone or e-mail from the privacy of their own homes, not from their civilian jobs. As you can appreciate, you have no reasonable expectation of privacy when you use the employer’s telephone, computer, or time to complain about the employer and to seek advice and assistance in dealing with the employer. Moreover, if the employer is annoyed with you because you have been called to the colors five times since September 11, 2001 and expect to be called again, and if the employer is looking for an excuse to fire you, the last thing you should do is to give the employer the excuse that he or she is seeking.

ROA is unique in providing this after-hours service. Neither ESGR nor DOL nor any other government agency or military association provides service members the opportunity to call after regular business hours.

Samuel F. Wright is retired from the Judge Advocate General’s Corps of the Navy Reserve, with the equivalent of more than 12 years of active duty. He has served active duty assignments at the Office of the Judge Advocate General of the Navy (Claims Division and Administrative Law Division), the A-12 Litigation Team, ESGR, the Office of the Naval Inspector General, Naval Forces Central Command, and the staff of the Reserve Forces Policy Board. His military decorations include a Meritorious Service Medal, a Joint Service Commendation Medal, and three Navy Commendation Medals.

Samuel F. Wright received his BA (political science) from Northwestern University in 1973, his JD from the University of Houston in 1976, and his LLM (labor & employment law) from Georgetown University in 1980. He is an active member of the District of Columbia bar and has been since 1993. He has been a member of the Texas bar since 1976 (currently inactive).

Captain Samuel F. Wright, JAGC, USN (Ret.)—800-809-9448, ext. 730 SWright@roa.org.