



July 10, 2020  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## James R. Vale Named to Key BVA Headquarters Post

The Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) has appointed James “Jim” R. Vale as the organization’s new National Service Director overseeing Veterans Benefits and Policy. Jim officially assumed his new role with BVA on July 6.

Jim will serve as BVA’s chief advocate for veterans of the U.S. military with vision loss in both the legislative and executive arenas, representing the Association and its stakeholders before Congress and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). He will supervise BVA’s accredited service officers in the execution of veterans’ claims and present both oral and written testimony on issues affecting BVA’s constituency, which includes an estimated 130,000 legally blind veterans across the United States.

“I am pleased to announce Jim’s appointment to this critically important position,” said BVA Executive Director Donald Overton. “He brings years of professional experience to our organization, which will be instrumental in guiding our modernization initiatives. Jim is well respected throughout the veteran community and epitomizes BVA’s mission of blinded veterans serving blinded veterans.”

A Gulf War era veteran of the U.S. Navy, Jim entered active duty in 1989. He served as an Avionics Technician and a Maintainer for F/A-18 Aircraft until 1994, when he was honorably discharged and visually impaired. He is now 100 percent service-connected for his vision loss.

Jim’s work with veterans’ claims comprises 15 years representing veterans, including ten years as a licensed veterans law attorney from the State of Washington. He served as the National Service Director for Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) from 2010 until 2016, where he led VVA’s national service program with 1,000 service officers who collectively won \$89 million in new benefits claims for veterans. More recently, he has worked as Supervisory Senior Counsel for the Board of Veterans Appeals in Washington, DC, an Assistant Director for Claims and Appeals for the American Legion at its Washington office, and Director of Veterans Benefits Programs for Perspecta of Herndon, Virginia, a \$4 billion IT defense contractor.

Jim’s academic degrees include a Bachelor of Science in Professional Aeronautics, a Master of Aeronautical Science, and a Master of Business Administration, all from Embry Riddle Aeronautical University. He also earned an Educational Specialist Graduate Degree in Blind Rehabilitation and a Master of Public Administration with a concentration in Public Finance, both from the University of Arizona. He received a Juris Doctorate from the Seattle University School of Law. Jim also is a graduate of the VA Southwestern Blind Rehabilitation Center and the VA Vocational Rehabilitation program.

Jim has written “Blindness and Vision Loss Cases” for **The Veterans Advocate** published by the National Veterans Legal Service Program (NVLSP) and presented “How to Rate a Blinded Veteran Case” in a seminar at the National Organization of Veteran Advocates (NOVA). He is a contributing author for the 2018-19 and 2019-20 **Veterans Benefits Manual** published by NVLSP/Nexis-Lexis, composing a section entitled “Evaluation of Eye Disabilities.”

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