



# Department of Veterans Affairs Office of General Counsel

**VA**



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Office of General Counsel

# OUTLINE

- Office of General Counsel Overview & Mission
- OGC's Structure
- Leadership
- Ethics Specialty Team
- Law Groups
- CAVC Litigation Group
- Offices of District Chief Counsel
- National Practice Group
- Management, Planning, and Analysis

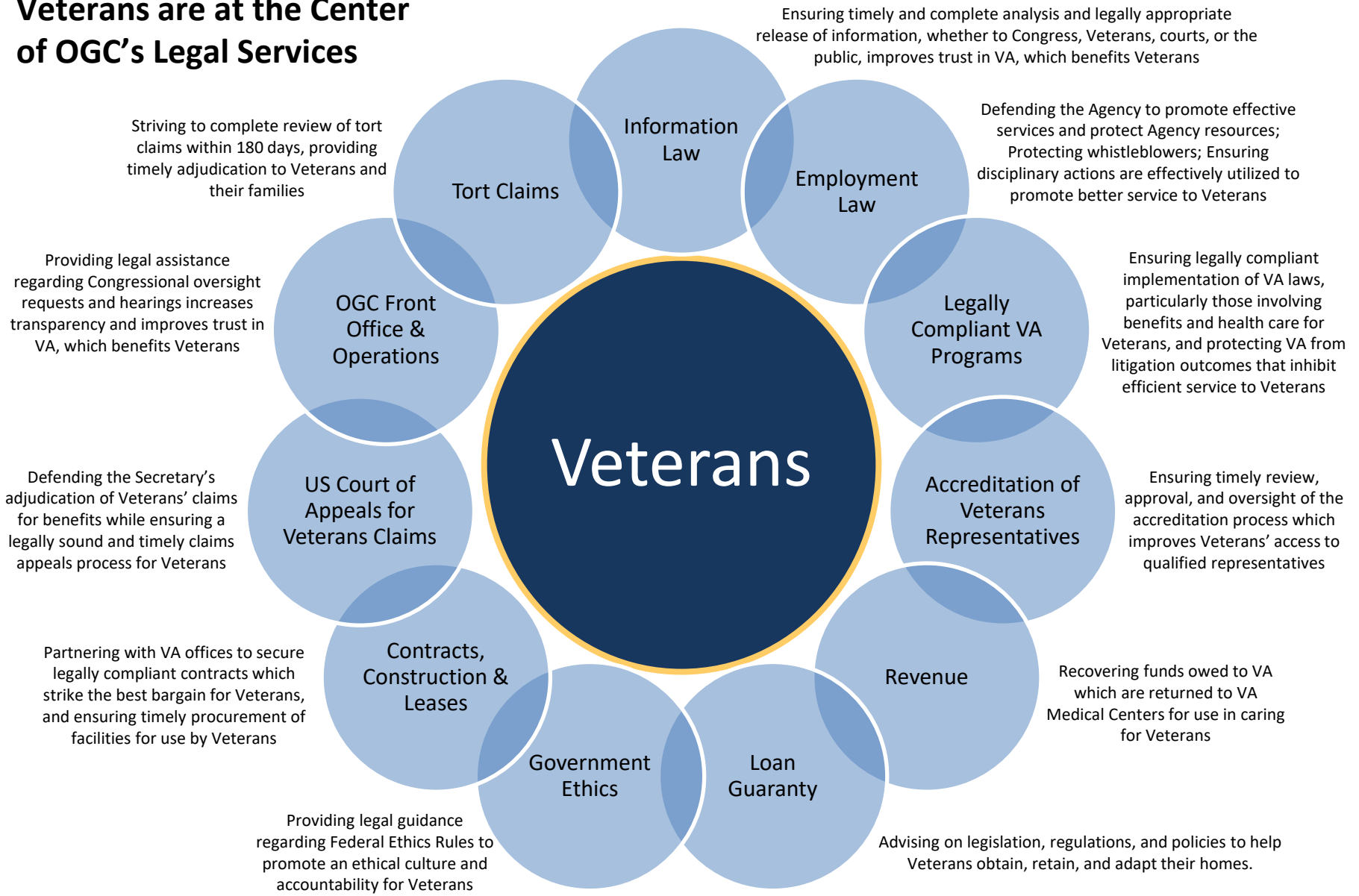
# OVERVIEW

The General Counsel provides legal advice and services to the Secretary (SECVA) and all organizational components of the Department. The General Counsel is, by statute, the Department's Chief Legal Officer.

# OGC's Mission

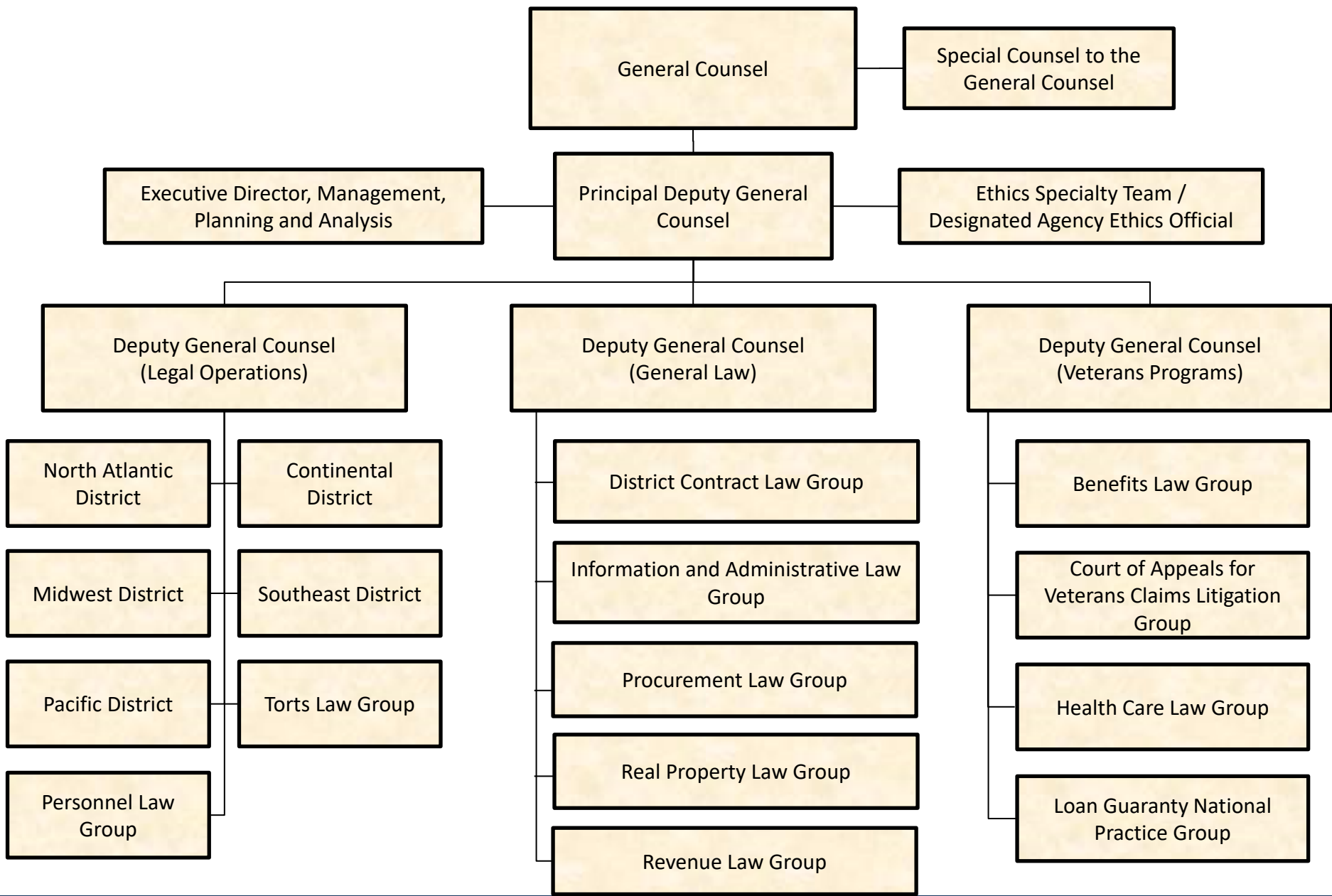
- The Office of General Counsel (OGC) serves as VA's in-house counsel and is committed to ensuring that every member of our organization has a Veteran focus and an understanding and commitment to the business priorities of our VA clients.
- OGC's attorneys act as business partners, providing sound legal expertise, and as needed, critical problem-solving skills and risk-management advice.
- OGC strives to provide real-time legal advice. Our goal is to be involved with Department decision-makers (our clients) during the initial phases of decisions and actions, rather than focusing only on defending actions after the decisions have been made. This proactive, preventive approach promotes better outcomes and reduces risk.

# Veterans are at the Center of OGC's Legal Services



# OGC's Structure

- The General Counsel, Principal Deputy General Counsel, Deputy General Counsel Legal Operations, Deputy General Counsel General Law, Deputy General Counsel Veterans Programs, and Senior Counsel to the General Counsel advise the SECVA, Deputy Secretary (DEPSECVA), VA Chief of Staff (COSVA), and other senior Department officials regarding all laws, regulations, Executive Orders, and judicial precedents pertaining to the Department.
- OGC provides a full range of legal and litigation services, as well as support for legislative and regulatory activities through our Ethics Specialty Team (EST), Chief Counsels who lead nine Law Groups, one National Practice Group (NPG), five Offices of District Chief Counsel, and the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims Litigation Group.
- The Management, Planning, and Analysis Team provides the administrative support for OGC operations.



Office of General Counsel

# LEADERSHIP





**Principal Deputy  
General Counsel, Performing the  
Delegable Duties of the General Counsel**

**Richard J. Hipolit**



**Deputy General Counsel  
General Law**

**Michael R. Hogan**



**Deputy General Counsel  
Legal Operations**

**Brent Pope**



**Deputy General Counsel  
Veterans Programs**

**David Barrans**

# General Law Chief Counsels



Kenyatta McLeod-Poole  
Information and Administrative Law Group



Robert Davenport  
Real Property Law Group



Robert Fleck  
Procurement Law Group



Michael Hughes  
District Contract Law Group



Kathleen Oddo  
Revenue Law Group

# Legal Operations Chief Counsels



Doris Gruntmeir  
Personnel Law Group



Tammy Kennedy  
Southeast District



Dennis McGuire  
Midwest District



Mike Newman  
Torts Law Group



Daniel Rattray  
North Atlantic District

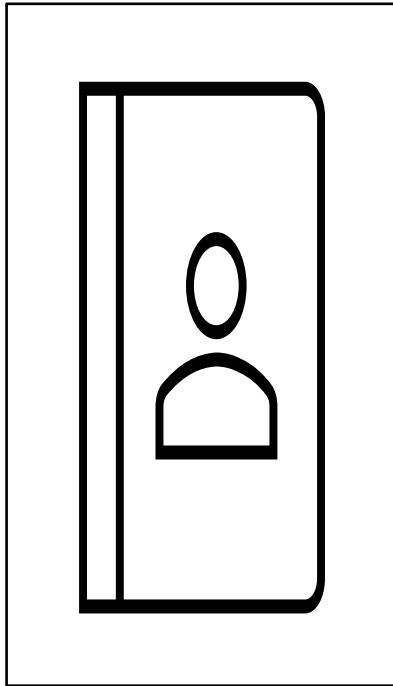


Jeffrey Stacey  
Pacific District



Michael Anfang  
Continental District

# Veterans Programs Chief Counsels



Vacant  
Benefits Law Group



Susan Blauert  
Healthcare Law Group



Mary Flynn  
Court of Appeals for  
Veterans Claims  
Litigation Group



Melinda Frick  
Loan Guaranty National  
Practice Group



Tracianna L. Winston  
Chief Counsel  
Designated Agency Ethics Official

Office of General Counsel

# ETHICS SPECIALTY TEAM (EST)

# Ethics Specialty Team

The Ethics Specialty Team (EST) is responsible for overseeing and managing the Department's Government Ethics Program. The EST Chief Counsel serves as VA's Designated Agency Ethics Official (DAEO) and is tasked with ensuring compliance with federal ethics laws and regulations.

- VA Stakeholders and federal employees from all levels of VA, contact EST for advice on ethics issues, including but not limited to, conflicts of interest, outside employment, gifts, and post-employment restrictions.
- EST manages the public and confidential financial disclosure program for the Department.

Office of General Counsel

# LAW GROUPS



# Law Groups

(Veterans Programs)

Each OGC Law Group is led by a senior executive Chief Counsel. Law Group attorneys possess expertise in specific subject-matter areas and provide specific legal advice to program officials; review proposed legislation, regulations, and directives; and handle litigation involving VA programs.

- **Benefits Law Group** – All Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Benefits (except Loan Guaranty), National Cemetery Administration (NCA) Issues (except Real Property), Accreditation of Representatives, Attorney Fee Decisions, and Benefits Litigation at the US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.
- **Health Care Law Group** – Health Care Administration and Operations, including Eligibility for Care, Homeless Programs, Veterans Canteen Service, Patents, Medical Research, and Non-Profit Research Corporations.

# Law Groups

(General Law)

- **Information and Administrative Law Group** - Information Disclosure (Freedom of Information Act, Privacy Act, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), Title 38), eDiscovery, *Touhy*, Information Management, Information Security & Technology, Federal Advisory Committee Act (closed meeting issues), Copyright & Trademarks, Appropriations, Law Enforcement, and Legislative Counsel.
- **Revenue Law Group** - Recovers funds owed to the United States by various legal-collection remedies, to include litigation in Federal and State courts.

# Law Groups

(General Law Continued)

- **Procurement Law Group** - Government Supply and Service Contracts, Sharing Agreements (38 USC 8153), Bid Protest Litigation, Information Technology Contracts, and Debarment and Suspension.
- **District Contract Law Group** - Provide legal advice, reviews, and litigation representation and support on matters pertaining to VA contracts, sharing agreements, and leases arising outside of VACO.
- **Real Property Law Group** - Real Property Acquisitions and Disposals, Leases, Construction, Energy Law, Environmental Law, and Enhanced Use Leases.

# Law Groups

(Legal Operations)

- **Personnel Law Group** - Human Resources (Title 5 & 38), Labor Relations, Equal Employment Opportunity, Merit Systems Protection Board, Office of Special Counsel (Whistleblower retaliation), and Immigration Law.
- **Torts Law Group** - Torts, Personal Immunity and DOJ Representation.

Office of General Counsel

# **U.S. COURT OF APPEALS FOR VETERANS CLAIMS (CAVC) LITIGATION GROUP**

# U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims Litigation Group

The U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims Litigation Group represents the SECVA in all litigation brought before the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC).

Office of General Counsel

# OFFICES OF DISTRICT CHIEF COUNSEL

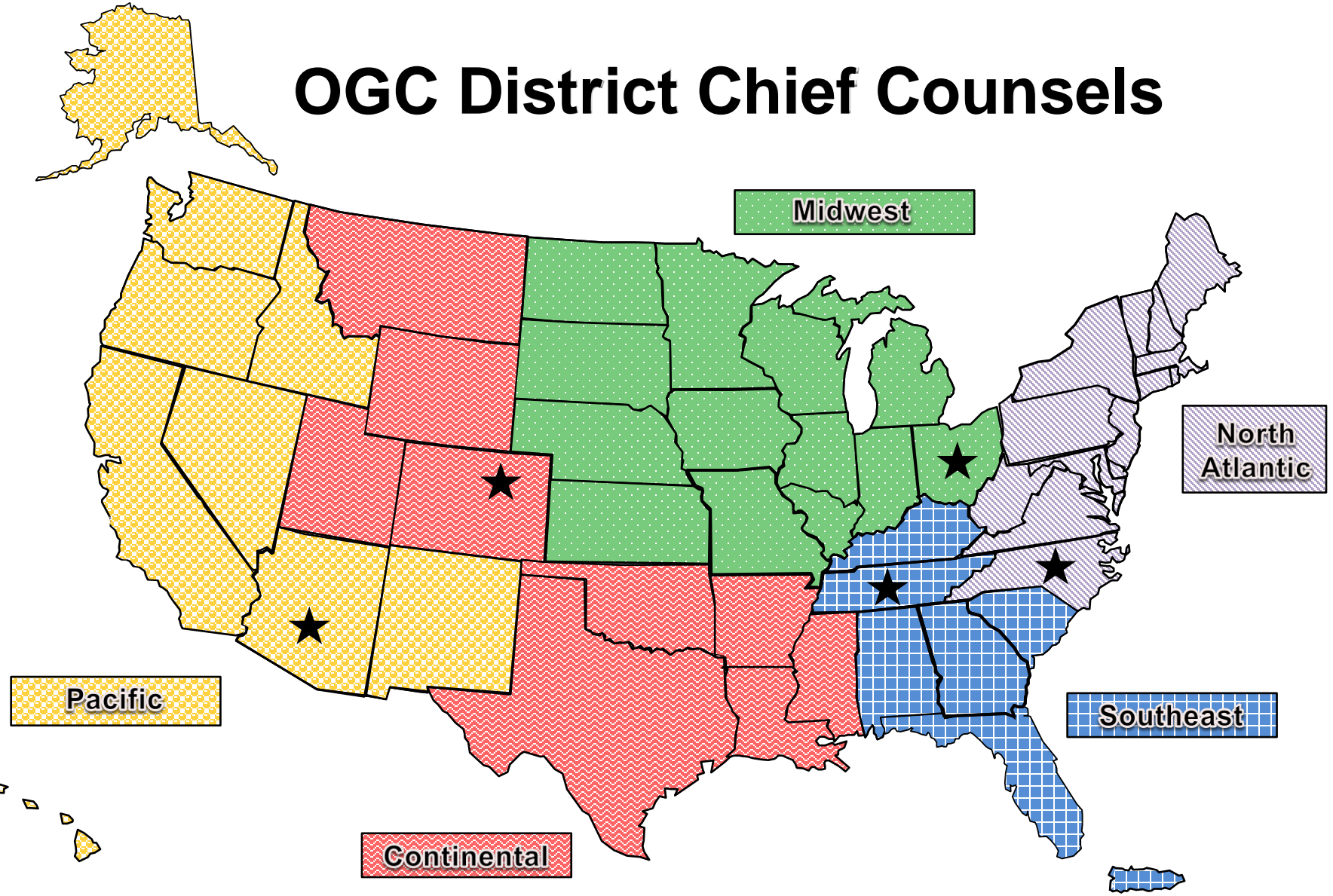
# OGC Offices of District Chief Counsel

There is one Chief Counsel office in each VA District, each office is led by a senior executive Chief Counsel. Each Chief Counsel is responsible for providing legal advice and assistance to Directors and other officials of all designated VA facilities within a District. The Chief Counsels fulfill these functions by performing the following tasks:

- Advise and represent management of VA facilities on issues relating to personnel and labor law.
- Provide other legal services and consultation as needed.



# OGC District Chief Counsels



★ = Physical Location of Sitting Chief Counsel

Office of General Counsel

# **LOAN GUARANTY NATIONAL PRACTICE GROUP**

# Loan Guaranty National Practice Group

The Loan Guaranty National Practice Group provides consolidated legal services in connection with the activities of VBA's multi-billion dollar Loan Guaranty Program.



Michael Gibbs  
Executive Director

Office of General Counsel

# MANAGEMENT, PLANNING, AND ANALYSIS

# Management, Planning, and Analysis

OGC's internal administrative functions are led by the Executive Director, Management, Planning & Analysis (MPA). MPA is responsible for supporting the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and OGC organization, including its budget formulation and execution, human capital support/liaison, knowledge management, and information technology support/liaison.