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Lawyers mobilize to help veterans

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The Associated Press

BATTLE CREEK — A law office on wheels from the University of Detroit Mercy will roll into Battle Creek on Tuesday to offer free legal help to veterans.

"We focus on providing legal assistance to veterans who are of lower income and are having trouble with disability benefits," Anita Scott-Meisel, an attorney with the Mobile Law Office, told the Battle Creek Enquirer.

The university is being paid \$200,000 by the state to provide the clinics, which started last year in the Detroit area. Scott-Meisel said the program is expanding

across the state, to include Grand Rapids, Lansing, Flint and Traverse City. Other stops planned this year are Benton Harbor, Muskegon and Pontiac.

The Mobile Law Office — a 27-foot recreational vehicle — will make stops at American Legion Post 54 and the Haven of Rest in Battle Creek. An estimated 13,000 veterans live in Calhoun County, according to the Michigan Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

Post commander Joe Pajak said he is putting up fliers to tell veterans about the clinic. He said the post tries to refer veterans to the appropriate agency when they

have questions but he does not hear many complain about their benefits.

Michigan ranks 45th among states in federal health care spending per veteran and 50th in veterans enrolled in Veterans Affairs health care, according to the college. Average disability payments for Michigan veterans are \$7,241, compared to the national average of nearly \$9,000.

Students from the Detroit Mercy School of Law and volunteer attorneys helped about 800 people during stops at senior centers, churches and other facilities last year.