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Roger Williams University School of Law

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January 17, 2017

Newsroom

Manning Lead Counsel on Commutation

Chelsea Manning's longtime counsel, RWU Law Professor David Coombs, is "shocked and overjoyed" by President Obama's decision to commute sentence.



BRISTOL, R.I., Jan. 17, 2016 – **David E. Coombs**, the Chief Justice Weisberger Visiting Professor of Law at the Roger Williams University School of Law who has represented Chelsea Manning, issued the following statement regarding President Obama’s decision on Tuesday to commute the bulk of Manning’s sentence:

“I am very thankful that the president decided to grant Chelsea’s commutation. I was shocked and overjoyed when I found out,” Coombs said. “I think anyone who was able to see the trial realized Chelsea was not trying to harm the United States. Based on the reason she released information to a journalist, she didn’t deserve to have her life thrown away through a 35-year sentence. She believed that the American public needed to see the loss of life that was happening both in Iraq and Afghanistan.”



Coombs believes President Obama granted the commutation because he could see that the release of that information did not cause as much harm as the government had claimed. “It was just embarrassment,” he said. “During the court martial, the government was inflating the harm and exaggerating the impact. I think the president through the commutation asked them to lay out how it hurt us and continues to hurt us; it really didn’t and it doesn’t. I think Chelsea now can look forward to beginning a new life at an age when anything will be possible for her.”

Professor Coombs is an internationally respected trial attorney and expert on military law. He served as the lead defense counsel in the highly publicized case of *United States v. PFC Bradley E. Manning*. And he has been representing Manning, who is now known as Chelsea Manning, in her fight for appropriate medical care for her gender dysphoria and in her request for a commutation.