

# Preface

This book is intended as valuable reading for anyone interested in learning about the law. Though especially designed for college students, it can and should be read by younger students, older students, paralegals, and anyone else who has a desire to learn about the law.

**Chapter 1** introduces the reader to the American legal system, focusing on the three branches of government with particular attention on the judicial system.

**Chapter 2** is about legal research. It teaches the reader how to find specific legal authorities and encourages hands-on experience because this is the best way to learn legal research.

**Chapter 3** teaches the reader how to brief a case. Two sample cases are provided for the reader to read, analyze, and effectively summarize.

**Chapter 4** teaches the very important skill of legal writing. Great emphasis is placed on the importance of good writing for any legal professional.

**Chapter 5** introduces the reader to law. The differences between civil and criminal law are outlined, establishing the foundation for subsequent chapters.

**Chapters 6, 7, and 8** provide a basic introduction to contracts, torts, and criminal law, respectively. The reader is exposed to many broad elements of these substantive laws, which are at the core of a sound legal education.

**Chapter 9** reminds the reader of the ethical obligations of a legal professional. Several hypothetical situations illustrate how a lawyer or paralegal should react to a variety of common dilemmas.

**Chapter 10** discusses careers in the law. The chapter emphasizes the range of possibilities within the legal field—virtually everyone can find something that is right.

Questions and problems conclude each chapter. They will help the readers review the chapter material, reinforcing their learning about the law.

In the **Afterword**, readers are asked to examine themselves to decide whether the law is an appropriate career choice. While that question may not be completely answered, this portion of the book should elicit some interesting self-analysis.

**Appendix A** is about being a paralegal. It discusses how broad the title “paralegal” really is, and how greatly the job descriptions and salaries for paralegals vary.

**Appendices B** through **E** provide examples of the three branches of government at work. First, the **United States Constitution** serves as a valuable starting point because it is the document on which every other law is based.

Next, the **Emancipation Proclamation**, written by President Lincoln, is an historic example of presidential power.

Eight **court cases** follow. Their main purpose is to provide the reader with additional exposure to case law and case briefing.

Finally, the **NALA and NFPA codes of ethics** provide valuable models for legal professionals.

The Third Edition has been updated with new material on sources of American law and Alternative Dispute Resolution, as well as new Supreme Court cases. You will also find additional critical thinking questions in each chapter.

For instructors using this book in the classroom, a Teacher’s Manual is provided, which should be helpful in answering many questions and as a guide to class preparation.