

Pennsylvania House of Representatives
Representative _____

Dear House Representative,

Veterans from the state of Pennsylvania have been returning home from service across the world with issues that make it difficult for them to cope with the transition from war zone combat to a civilian atmosphere. Many times they are dealing with this transition without the use of VA intervention. They sometimes feel that asking for help is a sign of weakness. In the military this has a stigma of showing vulnerability. Because of this feeling they tend to decide to medicate themselves with alcohol or readily available drugs, legal or prescription. This situation many times results in bad decision making and ultimately ends up in an arrest or interaction with the law for an unlawful action. Issues with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) AND Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) issues also come into play with these incidents.

Beginning in 2008 there have been special courts set up to assist and cater to Veterans having issues with the law which may or may not have been prompted by the transition problems resulting in unlawful actions. These courts are setup to not only deal with the Veteran but to assist them with a treatment which will allow them to transition into the civilian life. The Veteran Treatment Court name implies it is not a normal court process. Veteran Treatment Courts have in place many steps with Veteran commitments to assure the Veteran get the help and medical attention needed.

Pennsylvania has about 18 County Veteran Treatment Courts. These existing courts are a testament to the success of the concept of their existence. Besides giving back the life of our Veteran after participating, the taxpayer savings for not being jailed has been documented to be an impressive advantage. A documented ten percent record of re-offenders of Veterans after completion of the Veteran Treatment Court Process is low compared to the fifty percent normal re-offender rate of convicted offenders in the public sector, it shows the time and money spent is effective.

Currently there are two bills in the House of Representatives and the Senate which are directed to the increase of the number of Veteran Treatment Courts in the state of Pennsylvania. House Bill 887 and Senate Bill SB 517 share the interest of setting up Veteran Courts in all counties of the state.

I encourage you as an elected official of the State of Pennsylvania, to read and support these pieces of legislation to allow more of our Pennsylvania Veterans the ability to get their lives back from the Military Service we ask them to serve. They returned home needing our help to regain their lives in a civilian world. We owe this to our brave men and women we have sent to serve our great nation and state.

Judges, lawyers, veterans groups and veterans charged with offenses all see the benefits of Veterans Courts. It's a proven success. The mentors who volunteer and work with veterans can have a significant impact on veterans going through the program. We have veterans who can testify to how the program changed their lives if you want to speak with them. There is even a Commonwealth website dedicated to Veterans Courts <http://www.pacourts.us/judicial-administration/court-programs/veterans-courts>.

I ask your support for these Bills for Veterans and the people of the State of Pennsylvania.

Thank you for your consideration,