

RESOLUTION

Resolution No.

19 - 10

Subject

Veterans Treatment Courts in New York State

WHEREAS, New York State is home to nearly 800,000 veterans and most return home and adjust well to civilian life. However, others face challenges as they reintegrate into their homes and communities and,

WHEREAS, recent surveys have revealed that 22% of returning Post-9/11 veterans returning to New York State, have a “probable” mental health diagnosis and the number of veterans being treated for mental illness and substance abuse has increased 38% since 2014 and,

WHEREAS, for those veterans who do have difficulty transitioning, behavioral health and substance use issues are associated with various related problems such as homelessness, unemployment, and strained relations and,

WHEREAS, sometimes these challenges lead to involvement with the criminal justice system where it has been verified that approximately 5% of those under State custody either as inmates of State prisons or as incarcerated parolees are veterans and,

WHEREAS, Veterans Treatment Courts (VTCs) are a type of problem-solving court that provides an alternative to incarceration for eligible justice system involved veterans who have mental health or substance use disorders by offering those veterans treatment services which can be linked to veteran-specific community-based services and agencies and,

WHEREAS, VTCs work! Evidence supports the positive impact on veterans participating in VTCs, including reduced recidivism, lower alcohol and drug use, more stable housing, increased opportunities for employment, stabilized relationships with friends and family, and improved mental health and,

WHEREAS, the very first VTC in the nation was established in Buffalo, NY in 2008 propelling New York State into a national leadership role for this type of progressive social justice reform; its model is the national standard and blueprint for VTCs. There now are nearly 400 VTCs operational nationwide and,

WHEREAS, New York State is currently home to 33 veterans treatment courts in 25 counties that have helped over 4500 New York veterans. However, not every veteran in our state has access to these lifesaving programs. Almost one third of New York State veterans lack access to VTCs, leaving them to languish in a justice system not equipped to deal with their unique challenges, because current state penal law precludes veterans from accessing a VTC in adjacent or the closest county with a VTC, and,

WHEREAS, in his 2017 State of the State address, Governor Andrew Cuomo made a public commitment to ensure statewide access to Veterans Treatment Courts and permit the transfer of eligible cases from any local criminal court to a Veterans Treatment Court, now therefore be it,

RESOLVED, that the American Legion, Department of New York, supports the New York State Health Foundation’s Consensus Plan to Create Universal Access to Veterans Treatment Courts in New York State, and be it further,

RESOLVED, that the American Legion, Department of New York urges the New York State Legislature to enact legislation to authorize transfer of veterans facing criminal charges in a jurisdiction without a VTC to the closest county with a VTC.

FOR CONVENTION COMMITTEE USE

Approved _____ Rejected _____

Approved with Amendments _____

Consolidated with _____

Referred to Standing Committee on

Received and Recorded _____

Other Action _____

Signature _____
(Chairman)

Adjutant Signature

County

Below section to be completed when resolution
is submitted from another authorized source.

Name

Title

