

DRAFT RESOLUTION 20-19

SUBJECT: Expand Veteran Treatment Courts

SOURCE: AK, IN, IL, MO, OH, ND, CT, WI, DC, PA, NC, WA, MA, MI

WHEREAS, 2017 marks the sixteenth straight year of America at war, and there are now more than 21 million U.S. veterans including nearly two million from the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, the United States military instills a sense of honor, duty, leadership, commitment and respect, evident in the millions of veterans who have returned home to their communities as productive citizens, strengthened by their military experience; and

WHEREAS, an estimated twenty percent of veterans has symptoms of a mental disorder or cognitive impairment, and about 1 in 10 veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan seen in the VA healthcare system have a substance use disorder and there is a well-established link between substance abuse and combat-related mental illness and an unprecedented number of veterans nationwide are appearing in the courts to face charges stemming directly from these issues; and

WHEREAS, Drug Courts evolved out of the necessity for a solution-based approach to an influx of drug abusing offenders before the courts; and the Drug Court model and the Mental Health Court model are the nation's most successful, cost effective, and scientifically validated tool to deal with substance abuse and mental health issues in the criminal justice system; and

WHEREAS, Veterans Treatment Courts are hybrid Drug Courts and Mental Health Courts and have evolved out of the growing need for a treatment court model designed specifically for justice-involved veterans to maximize efficiency and economize resources while making use of the distinct military culture consistent among veterans; and

WHEREAS, Veterans Treatment Courts build upon this camaraderie by allowing participants to go through the treatment court process with people who are similarly situated and have common past experiences; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that AMVETS advocates for the continued use and expansion of Veteran Treatment Courts across the country.

Committee Recommendations:

VAVS & VA Hospital and Medical Services, Rehabilitation Benefits Committee: Adopt

Floor Action: ADOPTED