
HOUSE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE HAWAII SUPREME COURT TO
CONVENE A COMMITTEE TO IDENTIFY AT WHICH POINT VETERANS AND
RETURNING RESERVISTS AND NATIONAL GUARD MEMBERS ENTER THE
JUSTICE SYSTEM, AND HOW BEST TO ADDRESS THEIR NEEDS,
INCLUDING DEVELOPING A VETERANS COURT.

1 WHEREAS, approximately 120,000 military veterans and 40,000
2 active-duty military live in Hawaii; and
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4 WHEREAS, since September 11, 2001, members of the United
5 States armed forces and reserves and the Hawaii National Guard
6 have been engaged in combat in Afghanistan and Iraq at an
7 unprecedented rate and pace; and
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9 WHEREAS, recent research confirms that a significant number
10 of soldiers -- in some estimates, one in five -- will return
11 home from war with a combat-related mental-health condition,
12 such as post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury,
13 military sexual trauma, substance abuse, and other mental and
14 emotional health conditions; and
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16 WHEREAS, according to conservative estimates by the
17 National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, one of every three
18 homeless men has put on a uniform and served this country; and
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20 WHEREAS, Mental Health America of Hawaii has launched a
21 Healing the Trauma of War project to identify the unmet needs of
22 returning soldiers and their families, and to coordinate
23 community discussions on how to address these needs; and
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25 WHEREAS, in September 2009, Mental Health America of Hawaii
26 contracted with theStrategist, a healthcare advisory firm, to
27 assemble and lead an executive board of military, business, and
28 community leaders to propose policy, program, and process
29 changes to help National Guard and Reserve soldiers and their
30 families after deployment, and since then, theStrategist has
31 consulted with other states that have established special courts



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1 to deal appropriately with veterans and their cases by
2 connecting them with the services they need; and
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4 WHEREAS, the first veterans court was established in 2008
5 in Buffalo, New York, and since then, similar models have
6 emerged in counties across California and Oklahoma and in the
7 states of Illinois, Nevada, Texas, and Alaska; and
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9 WHEREAS, the veterans court in Buffalo began with a judge
10 who in his role as both the drug court and mental health
11 treatment court judge, identified veterans who were already on
12 his court docket, scheduled them to appear separately, and
13 staffed the hearing with a representative from the United States
14 Department of Veteran Affairs who was equipped with a laptop to
15 connect veterans, on-demand, with a wide range of support
16 services including healthcare insurance, mental health and
17 substance abuse counseling and treatment appointments, job
18 placement, housing assistance, school tuition scholarships, and
19 other federally-paid benefits and services from systems that
20 specialize in assisting veterans; and
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22 WHEREAS, veterans courts strictly monitor the
23 rehabilitation progress of the veterans, then graduate them from
24 the judiciary process as law-abiding citizens who are able to
25 resume contributing positively to the community; and
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27 WHEREAS, the veterans are also paired with peer mentors who
28 help keep them on track; and
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30 WHEREAS, these courts - modeled as a hybrid between drug
31 court and mental health treatment court -- boast recidivism
32 rates that are far better than any other treatment court; and
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34 WHEREAS, such a hybrid treatment court will save the State
35 as much as \$50,000 for each convicted offender each year based
36 on national estimates; and
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38 WHEREAS, a veterans court would also help a significant
39 portion of the homeless population through the intervention
40 provided, saving the State from the costs of related social
41 services; and



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WHEREAS, the United States Congress (Congress) has recognized the success of these courts in effectively rehabilitating veterans by providing alternatives to incarceration; and

WHEREAS, veterans courts are primarily funded with federal dollars from various resources, and there is additional legislation moving through Congress that would provide matching funds for 75 cents of every dollar spent on veterans courts; and

WHEREAS, Hawaii has been at the forefront of developing and implementing innovative programs and treatment courts; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the Twenty-fifth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2010, that the Chief Justice of the Hawaii Supreme Court is requested to convene a committee to identify at which point veterans and returning reservists and National Guard members enter the justice system, and how best to address their needs, including developing a veterans court; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the Governor, Chief Justice, Director of Veterans' Services, Director of the Department of Veterans Affairs Honolulu Regional Office, and President of the Oahu Veterans Council.

OFFERED BY:

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