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## HOUSE CONCURRENT 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



1 families after deployment, and since then, theStrategist has  
2 consulted with other states that have established special courts  
3 to deal appropriately with veterans and their cases by  
4 connecting them with the services they need; and  
5

6 WHEREAS, the first veterans court was established in 2008  
7 in Buffalo, New York, and since then, similar models have  
8 emerged in counties across California and Oklahoma and in the  
9 states of Illinois, Nevada, Texas, and Alaska; and  
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11 WHEREAS, the veterans court in Buffalo began with a judge  
12 who in his role as both the drug court and mental health  
13 treatment court judge, identified veterans who were already on  
14 his court docket, scheduled them to appear separately, and  
15 staffed the hearing with a representative from the United States  
16 Department of Veteran Affairs who was equipped with a laptop to  
17 connect veterans, on-demand, with a wide range of support  
18 services including healthcare insurance, mental health and  
19 substance abuse counseling and treatment appointments, job  
20 placement, housing assistance, school tuition scholarships, and  
21 other federally-paid benefits and services from systems that  
22 specialize in assisting veterans; and  
23

24 WHEREAS, veterans courts strictly monitor the  
25 rehabilitation progress of the veterans, then graduate them from  
26 the judiciary process as law-abiding citizens who are able to  
27 resume contributing positively to the community; and  
28

29 WHEREAS, the veterans are also paired with peer mentors who  
30 help keep them on track; and  
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32 WHEREAS, these courts - modeled as a hybrid between drug  
33 court and mental health treatment court -- boast recidivism  
34 rates that are far better than any other treatment court; and  
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36 WHEREAS, such a hybrid treatment court will save the State  
37 as much as \$50,000 for each convicted offender each year based  
38 on national estimates; and  
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40 WHEREAS, a veterans court would also help a significant  
41 portion of the homeless population through the intervention  
42 provided, saving the State from the costs of related social  
43 services; and



# H.C.R. NO. 278

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

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

10  
 11 WHEREAS, Hawaii has been at the forefront of developing and  
 12 implementing innovative programs and treatment courts; now,  
 13 therefore,

14  
 15 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the  
 16 Twenty-fifth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session  
 17 of 2010, the Senate concurring, that the Chief Justice of the  
 18 Hawaii Supreme Court is requested to convene a committee to  
 19 identify at which point veterans and returning reservists and  
 20 National Guard members enter the justice system, and how best to  
 21 address their needs, including developing a veterans court; and

22  
 23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this  
 24 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Governor, Chief  
 25 Justice, Director of Veterans' Services, Director of the  
 26 Department of Veterans Affairs Honolulu Regional Office, and  
 27 President of the Oahu Veterans Council.  
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