



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE U.S.
DEPARTMENT OF MINNESOTA
"NOBODY DOES MORE FOR VETERANS"

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Veteran Treatment Courts

The VFW's Concerns: Too often, the young men and women we send overseas or that stay stateside to defend our systems come home - because of their service – with wounded bodies and wounded minds. When those wounds lead to criminal behavior, we all must accept our shared responsibility for that crime and seek compassionate rehabilitation rather than the usual punishment.

We ask a lot of the young people we send to war to defend our freedoms. We owe them effective programming and supportive community relationships to ease the transition to a positive life after service - especially in their first few years home after service.

In Minnesota, twenty five out of eighty seven counties have Veteran Treatment Courts; another four counties have courts operating with veteran court protocols. In the last Minnesota Legislative Session, the VFW – along with all of the other Congressionally Chartered Veteran Service Organizations – supported Mn HF998 and Mn SF1153 to standardize court operating procedures in the remaining fifty eight Minnesota Counties, thus allowing these fifty eight Courts a legislative framework for veterans facing justice for their actions; actions mitigated by bona fide wounds incurred in service to our great Nation. The Mn House passed HF998; the Senate declined to pass SF1153 nor include it in the Omnibus despite the need and the \$1,307,000 savings to Minnesota taxpayers in just the first two years with savings continuing in future years as determined by the Fiscal Note prepared by the nonpartisan Mn Legislative Budget Office.

Justice for those that served should not be dependent upon a county line; Veterans throughout Minnesota deserve Restorative Justice that Veteran Treatment Courts, or, at a minimum, veteran court protocols, provide.

The VFW's Solution: The Department of Minnesota Veterans of Foreign Wars urges all Members of Minnesota's Congressional Delegation to urge their colleagues in the Minnesota House and Senate to ensure the Veterans Restorative Justice Act ("VRJA") – HF998/SF1153 – is given full hearings and passage in the 2020 Mn Legislative Session.

As expansion of Veteran Treatment Courts is a National VFW Legislative Priority, the Department of Minnesota Veterans of Foreign Wars urges the House and Senate to reach agreement on the Veteran Treatment Court Coordination Act of 2019 - H.R. 886. This bill passed in the US House of Representatives, was amended and passed in the US Senate, and returned to the House.