

HCS HB 1110 -- Drug Courts and Veterans Treatment Courts

SPONSOR: Day (Barnes)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on Veterans by a vote of 14 to 0.

Currently, a criminal defendant accepted by a drug court for disposition must be determined by the prosecuting attorney to be a nonviolent person. This substitute removes that requirement.

The substitute, also, allows any circuit court or combination of circuit courts to establish a veterans treatment court to provide an alternative for the judicial system to dispose of criminal cases that stem from substance abuse or mental illness of military veterans or current military personnel.

A veterans treatment court must:

(1) Combine judicial supervision, drug testing, and substance abuse and mental health treatment to veterans or current military personnel; and

(2) Make a referral for substance abuse or mental health treatment, or a combination of both, through the federal Department of Defense health care, the Veterans Administration, or a community-based treatment program except for good cause found by the court. Any community-based treatment program utilized must receive state or federal funds in connection with the referral and only refer the individual to a program which is certified by the Department of Mental Health or the United States Veterans Administration unless no appropriate certified treatment program is located within the same county as the veterans treatment court.

The charges, petition, or penalty against a court participant may be dismissed, reduced, or modified upon the successful completion of the program. Any fees received by a court from a participant as payment for substance abuse or mental health treatment programs must not be considered court costs, charges, or fines.

FISCAL NOTE: Estimated Net Effect on General Revenue Fund of an income of \$0 or a cost of Unknown in FY 2013, FY 2014, and FY 2015. No impact on Other State Funds in FY 2013, FY 2014, and FY 2015.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that with the large number of veterans returning home with traumatic brain injuries and post traumatic stress disorder there is an increasing number of veterans getting into legal trouble. By establishing these

veterans courts, it allows for the judicial system to look into the circumstances behind the problem and find alternative remedies other than incarceration of these veterans.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Barnes; Phillip Britt, Veterans Court Commissioner; Pat Roe Kerr; Dewey Reihn, Missouri Association of Veterans Organizations and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Missouri Department; Jeremy Amick, Silver Star Families; and Thomas Huber.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.