

Regular Session, 2012

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 105

BY REPRESENTATIVE LORUSSO

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs to study Veterans Treatment Courts and the feasibility of creating and implementing such courts in the state of Louisiana.

WHEREAS, military veterans have served their country and this great state; and

WHEREAS, as a result of their service, many veterans suffer combat-related trauma and experience a higher rate of substance abuse and mental health issues; and

WHEREAS, sometimes, these substance abuse and mental health issues manifest themselves in criminal acts both great and small; and

WHEREAS, state court judges are joining with local prosecutors, public defenders, United States Department of Veterans Affairs officials, and local lawyer volunteers to create courts with veterans-only case proceedings, because they have seen a common thread of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, head injuries, and mental illness underlying crimes committed by veterans; and

WHEREAS, Judge Robert Russell, presiding judge of the Buffalo Drug Court and Buffalo Mental Health Court, created the nation's first Veterans Treatment Court in January of 2008, in response to the growing number of veterans appearing on the dockets who were addicted to drugs or alcohol or suffering from mental illness; and

WHEREAS, the widespread growth and early success of Veterans Treatment Courts has led a number of states to introduce legislation pertaining to veterans in the criminal justice system and establishing Veterans Treatment Courts, and most recently, California, Colorado, Illinois, Oregon, and Virginia have passed similar legislation establishing Veterans Treatment Courts; and

WHEREAS, it is imperative that the Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs conduct a study regarding the creation and implementation of a Veterans Treatment Court in this state; and

WHEREAS, the study should highlight the increasing needs and advantages for additional dockets to accommodate Veterans Treatment Courts, to assist in rehabilitating those service members who will be returning from Afghanistan and Iraq in the immediate future, and to provide them with the opportunity to live a sober and stable life while restoring their military honor and their commitments to family and community; and

WHEREAS, any such study of a Veterans Treatment Court program must promote a non-adversarial approach within its framework and build awareness of the important advantages to adopting such a court system.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs to conduct a study of Veterans Treatment Courts and the feasibility of creating and implementing such courts in the state of Louisiana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that other entities are urged to participate in this study, including but not limited to the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, the Louisiana Supreme Court, the Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Criminal Justice, the Louisiana State Bar Association, the Louisiana District Attorneys Association, and the Louisiana Public Defender Board.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

---

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

---

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE