



Justice Involved Veterans Support Act

The Challenge:

Approximately 181,000 justice-involved veterans are incarcerated in the United States. Most were not identified during their criminal proceedings to be referred to a Veteran Treatment Court (VTC) or a Veteran Justice Outreach office. In many cases, veterans do not receive this referral because of a lack of knowledge that they are eligible for these benefits.

Over half of justice-involved veterans have mental health or substance abuse disorders, including PTSD, depression, alcoholism, or drug addiction. Many justice-involved veterans are homeless or at-risk for homelessness, and have difficulty finding work or reentering society. The majority of incarcerated veterans were discharged from the military between 1974 and 2000.

VTCs result in far lower veteran recidivism rates than incarceration among the general prison population and research indicates that participation in VTC services produces sustainable improvements in recovery and PTSD in participants. There are approximately 500 counties with VTCs in the United States, but more justice-involved veterans need to know they exist.

The Solution:

The Justice Involved Veterans Support Act will help identify veterans involved in the criminal justice system to ensure they have access to the resources and benefits they deserve.

Specifically, this bill would create a pilot program to provide grants and technical assistance to state prisons and local jails to improve documentation of whether inmates are veterans. The goals of the pilot program include assisting the VA Secretary and state VA offices in providing benefits to incarcerated veterans and increasing the number of veterans involved in the criminal justice system whose cases are diverted to VTCs.

Prisons and jails chosen to participate in this pilot program will include those in states with higher populations of veterans and veterans living in poverty, and those in jurisdictions containing a VTC or veterans diversion program.