

Dennis J. Adkins  
JUDGE

## COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

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### **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 409**

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Rezabek, Ranking Member Celebreeze, Members of the House Criminal Justice Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on House Bill 409, which allows the creation of Veteran's Treatment Courts in Ohio.

My name is Dennis Adkins. I am a Judge on the Montgomery County Common Pleas Court and it was my honor to begin the first Veteran's Treatment Court in our area of Ohio in 2013.

### **THE NEED FOR VETERAN'S TREATMENT COURT**

As you are aware, there have been major changes in the type of military service provided since September 11, 2001, when our country was attacked. It is no longer the norm that an individual is deployed one or two times to a hostile environment but rather the ever-increasing need for our military presence has caused multiple deployments. I have personally known eight to ten deployments by one service member. One thing that is constant, whenever a service man or woman returns from a deployment, changes are noticed in their general behavior and personality. Some of these changes become very serious problems including post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injuries, personality disorder, substance abuse, and violent tendencies. Many times these problems result in the veteran becoming involved in the Criminal Justice System for the first time in their lives. Another startling result of the state of our current military service is that we are still seeing about twenty-two veterans a day committing suicide in this country. Being in the service is a unique experience which develops unique characteristics and problems. In turn, the Veteran's Treatment Court uses unique techniques to assist the veteran in returning to a normal life style as a law-abiding citizen.

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## WHY THIS BILL IS NEEDED

Some of the reasons why Ohio needs this bill are:

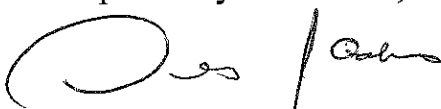
- It provides statutory authority for the development of these types of courts;
- It recognizes the need and the desire of this legislative body to help treat the injuries suffered by our nearly nine million veterans in this state;
- It allows the services of the Veteran's Treatment Court to extend to all corners of this state allowing it to cross jurisdictional lines;
- It provides for uniformity of the Courts throughout Ohio; and
- It provides for a diversion type of program for lower classification crimes, which is currently within the discretion of eighty-eight prosecutors through the state. Providing this diversion program does two important things:
  - 1) Provides incentives for those who successfully complete the program; and
  - 2) Recognizes that if the individual's military service contributed to the problems of the veteran, the bill provides a small way for the community to pay the veteran back for their sacrifice.

## COST SAVINGS TO TAX PAYERS

Though not the immediate goal in the creation of this bill, the bill will however, provide cost savings to the eighty-eight counties throughout Ohio. This program allows for diversion but first, the defendant enters a provisional plea of guilty to the charge and that charge is held in abeyance to see if they successfully complete the program. If they do, the incentive is that they can obtain a dismissal of the charges. If not, they have already pled guilty and the judge proceeds with sentencing. Thus, you have avoided the cost of Grand Jury proceedings, additional court costs, jury costs, defense counsel costs, and the general costs of prosecution.

The passage of this bill is not only a benefit and win for the veteran, but for the courts, the prosecutors, the families of these veterans, the taxpayers in the State of Ohio, and the Criminal Justice System as a whole. I, and many other judges across the state, encourage the passage of House Bill 409 to continue to support the men and women who have served our country.

Respectively Submitted,



Judge Dennis J. Adkins