

**We are asking our State Elected Officials to Support the  
THE VETERAN'S RESTORATIVE JUSTICE ACT (VRJA)  
House File 478(FEIST)/Senate File 116(CHAMBERLAIN):**

**What has happened:**

- The Minnesota House of Representatives has passed the Veteran's Restorative Justice Act two years in a row. The MN Senate has refused to give the bill a hearing and pass it into law.

**What the Veteran's Defense Project is asking you to do:**

- We are asking you to meet with the local State Senator and get a commitment from them that they will pass the Veteran's Restorative Justice Act. You can call them, email them or ask them to meet in person in district, have a cup of coffee with them.

**What does VRJA do?**

- Provides access to a specialized sentencing structure for eligible veterans who have committed lower criminal offenses as a result of a service-related condition. Instead of going to jail or prison, a non-adversarial approach is taken, the veteran gets a chance to heal from service-related trauma that contributed to the offense and is returned to the community of law-abiding citizens – an asset rather than a liability.
- Provides uniformity to Minnesota's existing veterans treatment courts, each of which currently uses different models.
- Creates access in all Minnesota counties to the same sentencing structure as a veteran's treatment court. Currently, only 26 of Minnesota's 87 counties have a veteran's treatment court.
- The judge determines eligibility for the program. A veteran who wants the benefit of the VRJA must release records to the judge to show the veteran's offense is due to service-related trauma.

**Once a veteran is eligibility for VRJA, what happens next?**

- Eligible defendants enter a guilty plea, but that plea is not accepted by the Court. The court places the defendant on probation for a period not to exceed the maximum sentence provided for the offense.
- The judge has the flexibility to set conditions for supervision including treatment, education, and rehabilitation.
- The court, the treatment program, the county veterans service officers, probation agents, and the US Department of Veterans Affairs collaborate to maximize services and benefits to the veteran.
- During the probation period, the veteran attends a treatment, education and/or a rehabilitation program that specializes in working with veterans. The court carefully monitors treatment and services.
- If the veteran violates the conditions of probation, the judge may elect to sentence the veteran within the law.

**At the end of the probationary period a hearing is held to determine if the terms of probation have or haven't been met.**

- At the end of supervision, the court holds a hearing with the veteran, the prosecution, probation, and any victims to evaluate the veteran's rehabilitation against the harm of the offense.
- The veteran must demonstrate to the court that the conditions of probation have been met, that the veteran has benefited from the treatment and services provided and is no longer a danger to the community.

**If the terms of probation have been met, charges are dismissed.**

- The court determines if it is in the interest of justice to grant restorative relief and dismiss the charges based on the veteran's probationary treatment, community service, personal responsibility, leadership, development of career potential, and level of harm to the community or victim from the offense. If these conditions are met, plea is not entered and the charges are dismissed. A non-public record of the case is retained by the BCA if there are future offenses, similar to the record retention for stays of adjudications of drug offenses.

**Passing the VRJA will save the State over \$1 million per year.**

**Groups who Supports VRJA**

Minnesota County Attorneys Association  
Hennepin County Attorney, Michael Freeman  
Washington County Attorney, Peter Orput  
Ramsey County Attorney, John Choi  
Commanders Task Force  
Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)  
American Legion  
Disabled American Veterans (DAV)

Minnesota Board of Public Defense  
State Public Defender, William Ward  
Minnesota Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers  
Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs  
Minnesota Social Services Association  
Violence Free Minnesota

**For more information contact: Amy Koch (Lobbyist): 763-300-8492  
Ben Johnson (MN Dept. Veterans Affairs) 651-201-8226**

**When you have had your contact with your legislator please email: [VRJA@veteransdefenseproject.org](mailto:VRJA@veteransdefenseproject.org)**

- **Let us know who you are, where you are from and a way to contact you.**
- **The name of the Legislator you met with and when**
- **A brief description of the discussion and if the Senator agreed to push for a hearing and pass the bill.**