

Justice for Those Who Served: David W. Magann, PA, Advocates for New Veterans' Treatment Courts in Florida

Tampa, Florida – The Florida House of Representatives voted unanimously to approve House Bill 845, creating veterans' treatment courts. These courts, modeled after drug treatment courts, offer a non-adversarial way for veterans to get their lives back on track after a criminal case. The House voted 114-0 to pass the bill, which allows a court to send a veteran defendant to a veterans' treatment court.

Veterans' treatment courts offer an alternative to the criminal court system. While enrolled in the treatment court, veterans check in with the court frequently to discuss their progress toward certain goals. They must also undergo regular drug and alcohol screening.

To participate in a veterans' treatment court, a veteran defendant must have "a service-related mental health condition, service-related traumatic brain injury, service-related substance use disorder, or service-related psychological problem, or has experienced military sexual trauma." The bill alters Florida's existing treatment court law. Currently, a state attorney must approve a defendant's application for treatment court. Under the new law, a judge can send a defendant to treatment court without a state attorney's approval. Judges work with an "interdisciplinary team" of professionals who understand the unique effects of military service on mental health and cognitive functioning.

Veterans' treatment courts are similar to drug treatment courts. Both programs give those convicted of a crime the chance to work on drug abuse and similar issues. The programs provide the support people need to move past a tough period and toward a healthier future.

Other supporters of the bill include the Florida Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Florida Smart Justice Alliance.

HB 845 received three unanimous votes in committee before receiving a unanimous vote in the full House. However, the bill's future is an open question. A companion bill, SB 1724, has not received a hearing.

Attorney David Magann is a Marine Corps Veteran with a Criminology Degree from The University of South Florida and a Law Degree from The University of Miami. He will be your advocate working to get the benefits you have earned under the Department of Veterans Affairs. David Magann is also a social security and disability (SSI) lawyer. If you need a veteran's benefits lawyer or social security attorney, contact David W. Magann, PA at 1.855.418.9354.

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