WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §62-16-2

§62-16-2. Legislative findings.

(a)(1) The Legislature recognizes that while most veterans are strengthened by their military service, the combat experiences of many veterans have unfortunately left a growing number of veterans who suffer from issues such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and traumatic brain injury. A growing body of research shows that one in five veterans will have symptoms of a mental illness, mental health disorder, or cognitive impairment. One in six veterans who served in either Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom suffer from substance abuse and related issues. As a result, many veterans have found themselves in the criminal court system charged with crimes which may be directly attributable to these service-related issues.

(2) The Legislature further recognizes that a Military Service Members Court is necessary to link veterans with the programs, benefits, and services that are necessary to help them overcome these issues and provide them with rehabilitation services instead of incarceration.

(3) Given the context of veteran life, especially given their past training and experiences in the Armed Forces, it is reasonably anticipated and likely that military service members would respond favorably to a structured environment. The Military Service Members Court is a professional, structured, and monitored program which mandates and provides participant accountability and responsibility, including mandatory court appearances, treatment, and counseling sessions, as well as frequent and random testing for drug and alcohol use. However, the Legislature also finds that some may still struggle. Those are the veterans who need the structure and support of a Military Service Members Court program the most. Without the structure of a Military Service Members Court program mentally ill and challenged veterans may well reoffend, remain in the criminal court system, and suffer under the emotional, physical, and mental yoke of substance abuse.

(4) The Legislature creates the Military Service Members Court to ensure that these veterans in need are able meet their obligations to themselves, their family, their loved ones, the court, and their community.

WV Legislature