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Media Contacts
Louie Flora
Staff to Senator Tobin
Louie.Flor@akleg.gov
(907) 465-3704

Senator Tobin and Representative Stapp Introduce Veterans Justice Act to Expand Alternatives to Incarceration for Alaska Veterans

Juneau, AK — Today, Senator Löki Gale Tobin, D-Anchorage, and Representative Will Stapp, R-Fairbanks, introduced [Senate Bill 236](#) and [House Bill 299](#), known as the Veterans Justice Act, which creates a statewide veteran sentencing program to reduce recidivism and support veterans' reintegration into society who face certain criminal charges, while upholding public safety in Alaska.

Alaska is home to approximately 60,000 veterans, and far too many continue to face challenges related to their military service, including post-traumatic stress disorder, which is linked to higher rates of substance abuse and incarceration. This is particularly true among those who served after September 11, 2001. These veterans have experienced more combat deployments and redeployments than any previous generation.

“As the Representative for Fort Wainwright in Fairbanks, I am acutely familiar with the issues that affect veterans transitioning out of the service with these experiences,” said **Representative Stapp**. “This bill is meant to balance the need for individuals to be accountable for their own actions and the duty we owe our men and women who volunteer to protect and preserve our way of life.”

The Veterans Justice Act focuses on early intervention and support for veterans facing criminal justice charges, with a focus on rehabilitative sentencing. Currently, veterans in the justice system face a patchwork of programs that vary widely by jurisdiction and are often difficult to access because of strict eligibility requirements, geographic location, and limited incentives to participate.

“Military service can leave lasting impacts. Recognizing that accountability and rehabilitation are not mutually exclusive, we can create a uniform, evidence-based veteran sentencing program that holds veterans accountable while ensuring they have access to treatment and support,” said **Sen. Tobin**. “This will help reduce recidivism and support successful reintegration into their communities. These folks put their lives on the line for our freedoms, and they deserve our support.”

Senate Bill 236 and House Bill 299 will allow courts to use deferred judgments and probation for veterans who meet the criteria. It requires individualized case plans, evidence-based treatment, and directs courts to consider a defendant’s veteran status as a factor at sentencing. There are exemptions to this Act for individuals facing certain serious offenses.

The legislation also directs law enforcement, courts, and correctional personnel to verify veteran status. In addition, the bill requires the Alaska Criminal Justice Data Analysis Commission to collect and report data on program outcomes.

Senate Bill 236 has been referred to the Senate State Affairs and Senate Judiciary Committees. House Bill 299 has been referred to the House Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Committee and the House Judiciary Committee.

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Alaska Senate Majority | Capitol Building 4th Avenue & Main Street | Juneau, AK 99801 US

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