

Arkansas Veterans Coalition

2015 Legislative Session Initiatives

Veterans Treatment Court

Plus Supplemental Comments:

State Veterans Homes Programming
Resident Tuition Initiative

Senate Committee on Children and Youth
House Committee on Aging, Children and Youth, Legislative & Military Affairs
Meeting Jointly
10 September 2014

Arkansas Veterans Coalition

representing 250 thousand Arkansas veterans
and their families

Arkansas affiliates of national and local veteran service organizations

ABATE 13	Little Rock AFB Green Knights, Chapter 55
Air Force Association, Chapter 253	Marine Corps League
American Legion	Military Officers Association of America
Arkansas County Service Officer Assn	Military Order of the Purple Heart
Arkansas Veterans Commission	National Guard Association of Arkansas
Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association	Northwest Arkansas Veterans Coalition
Disabled American Veterans	Rolling Thunder, Arkansas Chapter 1
Enlisted Association of Arkansas	Veterans of Foreign Wars
National Guard	Veterans Outreach Ministries
Fleet Reserve Association	

Workforce and Economic Development Impact

Objectives

- **Attract** and retain skilled, disciplined and loyal workforce
- **Eliminate** reasons veterans go elsewhere to launch their second career
- **Capitalize** on military retiree and other veterans' leadership experience, discipline, technical skills and entrepreneurial spirit
- **Target** access to new federal transfer dollars to the Arkansas economy (uniformed services retired pay, survivor benefit program annuity, VA-funded health and benefit payments)

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Arkansas Veterans Coalition 2015 Legislative Session Initiatives

- **Boost** workforce and economic development opportunities through state income tax exemption of uniformed services retired pay
- **Ensure** statewide access to Veterans Treatment Courts
- **Extend** resident tuition rates beyond Arkansas and eliminate local residency prerequisites for instate moves to attract and retain service members, veterans and their families
- **Direct** programming, planning, operations and oversight of a veterans state home network based on projected needs of Arkansas' most at-risk veterans

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Arkansas Veterans Coalition
2015 Legislative Session Initiative #2

Ensure statewide access to Veterans Treatment Courts

INTRODUCTION:

- Veterans treatment courts are innovative and effective for treatment of mental health conditions and substance abuse addictions – **resolving criminal offenses and saving lives**
 - **Rand Corporation** -- 31% of 1.8million veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan suffer from service-related mental health condition or traumatic brain injury
 - **DOJ** -- Veterans comprise 9.3% of incarcerated population; 70% jailed for non-violent offenses; 82% eligible for VA benefits; 18% had been homeless
 - **DoD** – Veterans treatment courts **reduce potential suicides** while saving incarceration costs

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2015 Legislative Session Initiative #2

FOCUS ON TREATMENT

- Assess treatment, housing, job training, benefits tailored by Federal and state VA, veteran service organizations, local agencies
- Fellow veteran **mentoring key to success**
- Potential for charges reduced, dismissed; convictions expunged

SELECTION OPEN

- Open to **combat and non-combat** experienced service members, Guard and reserve
- Consider service discharge and prohibiting offenses to **ensure family and community safety**

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Economic Impact of Statewide Veterans Treatment Court

	Prison	Jail
Population (from Arkansas Dem-Gazette)	17,380	2,297
Veteran % incarcerated (nationally)	10%	6.30%
Estimated Veterans incarcerated	1738	145
Estimate Total Incarcerated Veterans		1883

Provide VTC Treatment to:	Bed Space Created	Estimated Incarceration Cost Savings
100%	1544	\$ 32,964,481
(notional) 50%	941	\$ 16,482,241

- **Implementing Veterans Treatment Courts statewide**
 - Self-provides funds to pay for court, probation or other VTC cost
 - Tamps down jail overcrowding and emergency demands for expansions or new construction of county and state facilities

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POTENTIAL LEGISLATION

- Coalition’s initiative to ensure post adjudicated veterans **statewide VTC access** – whether achieved **through legislative action or administrative orders**
 - Perhaps gain experience through administrative court orders and then statutory guidance once regional efforts launched and experience gained
- **Support Judicial Council** effort to expand access across the state -- by circuit or combinations depending on need.

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2015 Legislative Session Initiative #3

Extend resident tuition rates beyond Arkansas and eliminate local residency prerequisites for instate moves to attract and retain service members, veterans and their families

OVERVIEW

- **Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014** (HR3230-enacted) caps tuition at the resident rate while living in the State
(Sec 702) Approval of courses of education provided by public institutions of higher learning for purposes of All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance Program and Post-9/11 Educational Assistance conditional on in-State tuition rate for veterans

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2015 Legislative Session Initiative #3

OVERVIEW-- CONTINUED

- **Federal action eliminates the residency waiting period** and gives us the opening to employ our Arkansas Higher Education system as means to engage, market and recruit veterans and families to move to Arkansas.
- **Policy actions by individual Arkansas institutions** reflect growing number of schools seeing the value in new and more distant market
 - Arkansas State and UALR has waived veteran residency waiting time
 - Arkansas Tech is close to acting on an even more aggressive path
 - University of Arkansas – Fayetteville now assesses online undergrad and graduate degree students the resident tuition rate
- **Local residency prerequisites** at 2-year public institutions -- inside and outside the University of Arkansas system -- **unequally assess veteran, serving Guardsmen and their families due to intrastate relocations.**

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GOING BEYOND THE FEDERAL LEGISLATION

- Eliminating detractors such as income tax burden on retired pay and residency waiting period **lowers barriers to retention and migration**
 - To take advantage of eliminating barriers **must next actively engage, market and recruit** service members, veterans and family members to remain/relocate to Arkansas
 - University of Arkansas system plus other public institutions give Arkansas are the means to **“hook and reel in”** service members in the 10- to 20-year career bracket
- Legislative-directed development of coordinated integrated marketing campaign will **yield more effective statewide migration benefit** than institutions operating unilaterally on their own policy authority

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2015 Legislative Session Initiative #3

PROPOSE LEGISLATION

- **Direct establishment of a program to engage, market and recruit** service members, veterans and their families to Arkansas using our public higher education system as a workforce weapon
 - Program might be similar to that used by Parks and Tourism and would be run by Workforce Services with ADHE and AEDC as partners
 - Connect non-resident students with Arkansas regions and employers; If Texas goes after at-risk states’ businesses -- Arkansas should go after at-risk states’ service members and veterans
- **Enact legislation ensuring local tuition intrastate wide** for service members to include Guardsmen and family members

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ANTICIPATED RESULTS

- 4-year and 2-year institutions benefit from access to **increased GI Bill enrollment** beyond their traditional markets
- Provides local business development, chambers of commerce and regional employers opportunity to tailor course work programs to **meet local workforce needs** funded by VA education benefits
- Outreach and job matching recruitment can spur workforce credentials matched to need while **influencing migration of financially secure** and disciplined former military personnel

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Arkansas Veterans Coalition
2015 Legislative Session Initiative #4

Direct programming, planning, operations and oversight of a veterans state home network based on projected needs of Arkansas most at-risk veterans

OVERVIEW:

- Arkansas lags our neighbors in providing establishing state veteran homes
- Arkansas lacks a model and roadmap to determine future needs and their potential location
- Reduction in long term care coverage under ACA will reduce the number of private facilities available to veterans in coming years.

PROPOSE LEGISLATION:

- Legislation directing **inclusive and transparent** planning and implementing a Veterans Home Roadmap **carried out by the Veterans Commission**

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2015 Legislative Session Initiative #4

STATE VETERANS HOMES ROADMAP CONSIDERATIONS:

- Use VA Benefits population data and densities as #1 factor in site plans
- Anchor network on VA health care facilities – Tobin, McClellan, Ozark medical centers and 12 VA community based outpatient clinics
- Grow network in the **highest demand areas** rather than regional dispersion
- **Provide VA the long range plan** in order for VA to program its matching construction funding program
- **Consider all operating models** and not necessarily the same model throughout to capitalize on local capabilities -- recognizing a state-run option may be the least effective and least efficient model

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- **Boost** workforce and economic development through state income tax exemption for military retired pay
- **Ensure** statewide access to Veterans Treatment Courts
- **Eliminate** residency prerequisites for in-state or local tuition for service members, veterans and their families – anywhere
- **Direct** programming, planning, operations and oversight of a veterans state home network based on projected needs of Arkansas' most at-risk veterans

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