COMMITTEE AMENDMENT AMENDED AND ADOPTED

May 20, 2014

**H. 3014**

Introduced by Reps. J.E. Smith, Bernstein, M.S. McLeod, McEachern, Weeks, Hart and Gilliard

S. Printed 5/20/14--S.

Read the first time April 23, 2013.

**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING CHAPTER 29 TO TITLE 14 SO AS TO ENACT THE “VETERANS TREATMENT COURT PROGRAM ACT”, TO REQUIRE THE CREATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF A VETERANS TREATMENT COURT PROGRAM IN EACH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT BY THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, TO PROVIDE FOR THE APPOINTMENT, POWERS, AND DUTIES OF A VETERANS TREATMENT COURT JUDGE, AND TO PROVIDE FOR REQUIREMENTS FOR AN OFFENDER TO QUALIFY FOR ADMISSION TO A VETERANS TREATMENT COURT PROGRAM.

Amend Title To Conform

Whereas, researchers have shown that a significant number of members of the United States Armed Forces who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan will suffer, as a result of their military service, mental health injuries, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety and acute stress, and injuries that affect brain function, such as traumatic brain injury; and

Whereas, while the vast majority of returning members of the United States Armed Forces do not have contact with the criminal justice system, and most veterans and members of the United States Armed Forces are well-adjusted, contributing members of society, psychiatrists and law enforcement officials agree that combat-related injuries have led to instances of criminality; and

Whereas, as a grateful State, we must continue to honor the military service of our men and women by providing them with an alternative to incarceration when feasible, permitting them instead to obtain proper treatment for mental health and substance abuse problems that have resulted from military service. Now, therefore,

SECTION 1. Title 14 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“CHAPTER 29

Veterans Treatment Program

Section 14‑29‑10. This Chapter may be cited as the ‘Veterans Treatment Court Program Act’.

Section 14‑29‑20. The General Assembly recognizes the success of various other states’ veterans court initiatives in rehabilitating certain nonviolent offenders who are veterans of a military conflict in which the United States military is or has been involved. The purpose of this chapter is to divert qualifying nonviolent military veteran offenders away from the criminal justice system and into appropriate treatment programs, thereby reserving prison space for violent criminals and others for whom incarceration is the only reasonable alternative.

Section 14‑29‑30. Each circuit solicitor may establish a veterans treatment court program. Each circuit solicitor that accepts state funding for the implementation of a veterans treatment court program must establish and administer at least one veterans treatment court program for the circuit within one hundred eighty days of receipt of funding. The circuit solicitor must administer the program and ensure that all eligible persons are permitted to apply for admission to the program.”

SECTION 2. The repeal or amendment by this act of any law, whether temporary or permanent or civil or criminal, does not affect pending actions, rights, duties, or liabilities founded thereon, or alter, discharge, release or extinguish any penalty, forfeiture, or liability incurred under the repealed or amended law, unless the repealed or amended provision shall so expressly provide. After the effective date of this act, all laws repealed or amended by this act must be taken and treated as remaining in full force and effect for the purpose of sustaining any pending or vested right, civil action, special proceeding, criminal prosecution, or appeal existing as of the effective date of this act, and for the enforcement of rights, duties, penalties, forfeitures, and liabilities as they stood under the repealed or amended laws.

SECTION 3. If any section, subsection, paragraph, subparagraph, sentence, clause, phrase, or word of this act is for any reason held to be unconstitutional or invalid, such holding shall not affect the constitutionality or validity of the remaining portions of this act, the General Assembly hereby declaring that it would have passed this act, and each and every section, subsection, paragraph, subparagraph, sentence, clause, phrase, and word thereof, irrespective of the fact that any one or more other sections, subsections, paragraphs, subparagraphs, sentences, clauses, phrases, or words hereof may be declared to be unconstitutional, invalid, or otherwise ineffective.

SECTION 4. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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