



Superior Court of California

COUNTY OF VENTURA
Hall of Justice
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

Michael D. Planet
Executive Officer/Clerk
and Jury Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VETERANS COURT

The judges of the Ventura Superior Court are pleased to announce the establishment of a Veterans Court. It began hearing cases involving veterans of the United States Military as a pilot project in November 2010.

The Veterans Court is a coordinated effort of the Ventura Superior Court, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and the County of Ventura Offices of the District Attorney, Public Defender, and Probation Agency. Under California Penal Code section 1170.9, defendants eligible for this court are United States military veterans who would otherwise be sentenced to county jail or state prison and who committed a criminal offense as a result of post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, substance abuse, or psychological problem stemming from U.S. military service. Eligibility is determined by a careful screening process designed to protect the community, verify veteran status and determine amenability to treatment. Admission to the program requires the unanimous approval of the judge, District Attorney and VA representative. Less than half of those screened since the program began last November have been admitted.

The goal of this innovative court is to prevent veterans from falling into a life of crime. Rather than arresting and jailing veterans for a few days or weeks, only to return them to the same type of life, this collaborative court connects veterans to needed treatment and services, which may include mental health care, drug and alcohol treatment, vocational rehabilitation, or other life skills services and programs. The process begins with a guilty plea and in-court meeting involving the veteran, his/her attorney and the VA representative.

The court is conducted under the direction of Judge Colleen Toy White, whose experience with domestic violence court and mental health court makes her uniquely suited to spearhead this program. Judge White stated, "We are proud to participate in this effort to hold veterans who have honorably served their country accountable for their crimes, while offering an opportunity for those who have suffered service-related psychological injuries to receive a wide range of services designed to help them succeed on probation."

Ventura Veterans Court hearings are held every Monday at 3:00 P.M. at the Hall of Justice, Courtroom 35, 800 South Victoria Avenue, Ventura, California 93009.

Veterans Court Contact Information:

Superior Court: Hon. Vincent O'Neill, Presiding Judge (805) 654-2238

District Attorney: Mike Lief, Senior Deputy District Attorney (805) 654-2526

Public Defender: Jean Farley, Chief Deputy Public Defender (805) 654-3033

Veterans Administration:

- **Primary:** Greg Cain, SST – Cell (310) 597-5016
- **Secondary:** Sergio Antoniuk, MSW – Cell (310) 597-3495; or (213) 253-2677 ext. 4771