

THE FLORIDA SENATE
2019 SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION PASSED
Committee on Judiciary

SB 910 — Court-ordered Treatment Programs

by Senators Gainer and Passidomo

The bill expands the eligibility criteria for individuals who may participate in a military veterans' and servicemembers' court programs, more commonly known as veterans' courts. Veterans' courts are problem-solving courts aimed at addressing and treating the root causes of criminal behavior in order to reduce criminal recidivism. For military veterans and servicemembers who are charged with or convicted of criminal offenses, often the underlying cause of criminal behavior is a military-related injury, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, or a substance abuse disorder.

Eligible veterans' courts participants may either be diverted to an appropriate treatment program before trial, or may be required to complete treatment after trial, as a condition of probation/community control. To help the participant successfully complete his or her treatment program, veterans' courts provide incentives (such as reduced penalties and record expungement), and individualized support.

Currently, the only veterans eligible to participate in Florida's veterans' courts are honorably discharged veterans, generally discharged veterans, and active duty servicemembers. Because of the success of the veterans' court programs in treating these individuals, the bill expands participation eligibility to any veteran discharged or released under any condition. Additionally, the bill extends participation eligibility to individuals who are current or former United States defense contractors or military members of a foreign allied country.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect October 1, 2019.

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 114-0