



Staff Memorandum

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Agenda Item 5(c)
(Consent Calendar)

Requested Action: Approval of the mission statement for the Special Committee on Veterans.

Attached is a copy of Mission Statement for the Special Committee on Veterans.

Mission Statement

Special Committee on Veterans

The Special Committee on Veterans' Affairs is established for the purpose of identifying the specific needs for quality legal services available to New York's military community and creating a framework within which those needs can be successfully met. The ultimate goal of the Special Committee is to improve the quality of legal services available to the community of veterans, which the Committee defines as past and present military members both active and reserve, and the families that support them. The Special Committee will focus on three key areas of need and has created a subcommittee to address each area: Veterans' Courts; Legal Services; and Legal Education.

The Special Committee has set forth specific goals for the subcommittees, which will help us achieve measurable success in the coming year. These goals include studying the availability of legal and other services throughout the state; making recommendations to expand the availability of such services; generating a report discussing ways in which service providers can share information about available legal resources; recruiting and training attorneys in legal issues commonly faced by the community of veterans; encouraging the use and creation of more specialized veterans' courts; and compiling a legal resource guide for the community of veterans and the attorneys who want to assist them, either on a pro bono or on a for-fee basis.

Working with the Office of Court Administration and community groups dedicated to veterans' issues, the Special Committee will encourage the establishment of more Veterans' Treatment Courts and/or tracks, modeled on the ground-breaking Buffalo Veterans Treatment Court, to deal with veterans charged with crimes. The goal of the Veterans' Courts will be to increase knowledge and competencies in military culture, substance abuse, mental health, traumatic brain injury (TBI), and other service related issues, including how to access veterans' benefits and services.

Recognizing that it may sometimes be very difficult for veterans to obtain legal assistance, the Special Committee will identify existing legal services resources available to veterans across including both fee based and pro bono. These resources will be compiled into a reference/referral guide for use by veterans and providers in order to facilitate the identification and use of available services.

The Special Committee also will strive to create and execute legal education programs for attorneys and the general public on veterans' issues. These programs will have the overarching theme of providing legal education to practitioners and non-lawyers involved in veterans' issues relating to services available and addressing legal issues unique to the community of veterans. In addition to presenting CLEs, the subcommittee will seek to deliver program templates to legal organizations throughout New York, that are interested in making such presentations.