



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Macomb County Prosecutor wants more veterans in treatment, fewer veterans in jail

MOUNT CLEMENS, MI - Macomb County Prosecutor Peter J. Lucido says treatment is better than jail for eligible non-violent veterans. The prosecutor's pending 2023 budget request seeks funding for two assistant prosecuting attorneys for various duties, including the Veterans Treatment Court docket.

"Heroes do not belong in jail. Let's celebrate Veterans Day by supporting treatment help for non-violent eligible veterans," said Macomb County Prosecutor Peter J. Lucido.

Anyone involved in a criminal case may identify a particular veteran defendant as a potential candidate for Veterans Treatment Court. But the judge, prosecuting attorney, and defense attorney must agree.

Veterans Treatment Court is one of 12 specialty treatment courts in which the prosecutor's office participates. The veterans court is successful at reducing repeat offenses by diverting some veterans from jail to treatment. It requires regular court appearances, mandatory treatment attendance, and frequent and random testing for drugs and alcohol. Macomb County Circuit Court and Clinton Township District Court have a Veterans Treatment Court program, and more may add it due to its success rate.

According to Justice for Vets, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization based in Alexandria, Virginia one in five veterans has symptoms of a mental health disorder or cognitive impairment due to combat. One in six veterans who served in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom suffer from a substance use issue. Left untreated, substance abuse and mental health disorders common among veterans can directly lead to involvement in the criminal justice system.

The state provides grant benefits for specialty treatment courts. The Prosecutor's Office is barred from receiving this grant funding, even though the grants require prosecutor participation as part of the "memorandum of understanding" agreements.

Lucido requested two full-time union assistant prosecuting attorneys to handle various court duties, including specialty treatment courts. If approved by the Macomb County Board of Commissioners, they would be added to the 2023 budget. Lucido's requested 2023 budget percentage increase for the Macomb County Prosecutor's Office is less than the 2023 requested budget percentage increases for the Macomb County Finance Department, Office of the County Executive, MSU Extension, and IT Department. The Commission is scheduled to vote on the 2023 budget in November.

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