



KING COUNTY

1200 King County Courthouse
516 Third Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

Signature Report

September 13, 2011

Ordinance 17185

Proposed No. 2011-0362.1

Sponsors Ferguson and Lambert

1 AN ORDINANCE relating to the establishment of a
2 veterans treatment court.

3 BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF KING COUNTY:

4 SECTION 1. Findings:

5 A. There are twenty-three million four hundred thousand veterans in the United
6 States; one million seven hundred thousand of those are veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan
7 wars. Washington state has six hundred twenty-three thousand veterans, and there are
8 one hundred forty-three thousand veterans in King County.

9 B. Veterans are not more likely to be arrested than the general population.
10 However, significant numbers of veterans become involved with the criminal justice
11 system as they return to civilian life and struggle with mental health issues, substance
12 abuse illnesses, or homelessness, or any combination thereof. The combination of mental
13 health problems and substance abuse can trigger behaviors that result in criminal justice
14 system involvement.

15 C. A 2000 Bureau of Justice Statistics report noted that eighty-one percent of all
16 justice-involved veterans had a substance abuse problem prior to incarceration and thirty-
17 five percent were identified as having alcohol dependency. Another study found that one
18 in three homeless adults had served in the United States military.

19 D. Many veterans returning from recent conflicts abroad may also struggle with
20 posttraumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury. Posttraumatic stress disorder
21 and traumatic brain injury can cause violent outbursts, and the conditions are often self-
22 medicated with alcohol and drugs.

23 E. National statistics show that veterans are over-represented among those who
24 commit suicide, constituting about twenty percent of the thirty thousand to thirty-two
25 thousand United States deaths each year from suicide. On average, eighteen veterans
26 commit suicide each day.

27 F. Veterans treatment courts are specialty therapeutic courts designed to address
28 the unique needs of individuals who have served in the United States military and help
29 these veterans to overcome the challenges they face as they return from conflict.
30 Veterans treatment courts are problem solving courts that integrate treatment with justice-
31 system case management, in which participants are closely supervised and monitored.

32 G. Veterans treatment courts are distinct from other therapeutic drug and mental
33 health courts in that they exclusively focus on veterans and the emphasize utilization of
34 treatment and benefits provided by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

35 H. The first veterans treatment court was started in 2008 in Buffalo, New York.
36 There are nearly eighty veterans treatment courts in, or beginning, operation across the
37 country. Four counties in Washington state currently operate veterans treatment courts:
38 Clark, Spokane, Pierce and Thurston.

39 I. Establishment of a veterans treatment court in King County would follow the
40 county's innovative history of implementing specialty therapeutic courts; King County
41 adult drug court began in 1994 and mental health court started in 1999.

42 J. The 2011 Budget Ordinance, Ordinance 16984, called for a report on the
43 feasibility of, and plan for, the implementation of a pilot project for providing specialty
44 court services for veterans.

45 SECTION 2. The recommendation to implement a veterans treatment court as
46 part of the county's regional mental health court is hereby accepted, and the executive, in
47 collaboration with the district court and the county's other criminal justice agencies, shall
48 work to implement the recommendation by January 1, 2012.

49 SECTION 3. In collaboration with district court and the county's other criminal
50 justice agencies, the executive shall work to establish a veterans treatment court in King
51 County with the following policy goals:

52 1. A reduction of the number of veterans who are mentally ill, have
53 posttraumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury, or any combination thereof, or
54 who use costly interventions such as jail, emergency rooms and hospitals;

55 2. A reduction of the number of veterans who cycle through the jail, returning
56 repeatedly as a result of their mental illness, posttraumatic stress disorder or traumatic
57 brain injury, or any combination thereof;

58 3. Diversion of veterans who are mentally ill, have posttraumatic stress disorder
59 or traumatic brain injury, or any combination thereof, from initial or further justice
60 system involvement; and

61 4. Explicit linkage with United States Department of Veterans Affairs programs
62 and services.

63 SECTION 4. In collaboration with district court, the office of the prosecuting
64 attorney, the office of public defense and superior court, the executive shall review

65 options for continuing veterans treatment court beyond the recommendation's initial pilot
66 year and shall recommend a proposed strategy to provide veterans and human services
67 levy funds for a veterans treatment court in King County. The recommendation shall be
68 submitted to the council at the same time as the transmittal of the 2013 Budget
69 Ordinance, in the form of a paper original and an electronic copy with the clerk of the
70 council, who shall retain the original and provide an electronic copy to all

71 councilmembers and to the committee coordinator for the law, justice, health and human
72 services committee or its successor.

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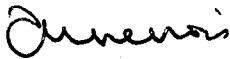
Ordinance 17185 was introduced on 8/22/2011 and passed by the Metropolitan King
County Council on 9/12/2011, by the following vote:

Yes: 9 - Mr. Phillips, Mr. von Reichbauer, Mr. Gossett, Ms. Hague,
Ms. Patterson, Ms. Lambert, Mr. Ferguson, Mr. Dunn and Mr.
McDermott
No: 0
Excused: 0

KING COUNTY COUNCIL
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON


Larry Gossett, Chair

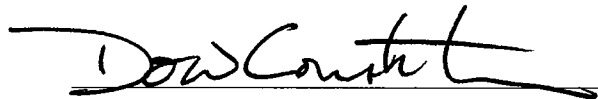
ATTEST:



Anne Noris, Clerk of the Council

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KING COUNTY COUNCIL

APPROVED this 23 day of SEPTEMBER 2011.



Dow Constantine, County Executive

Attachments: None