

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE PRELIMINARY ADVISORY FISCAL NOTE

BILL NO. Senate Bill 976

PRINTER NO. 1481

AMOUNT

\$100,000

FUND

General Fund

DATE INTRODUCED

December 12, 2019

PRIME SPONSOR

Senator Regan

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE OF BILL

Senate Bill 976 amends Title 42 (Judiciary and Judicial Procedure) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes to statutorily allow for the establishment of veterans courts.

This legislation amends section 916 (relating to problem-solving courts) by adding “veterans courts” to the list of problem-solving courts that may be established by courts of common pleas and the Municipal Court of Philadelphia.

Additionally, the bill provides that:

- If a court of common pleas or the Municipal Court of Philadelphia has established a veterans court, the court may provide for participation by defendants from other counties;
- Multicounty veterans courts may be established;
- If a court of common pleas or the Municipal Court of Philadelphia has established a problem-solving court, except for a veterans court, the court may establish a veterans track within the problem-solving court; and
- A court of common pleas or the Municipal Court of Philadelphia that established a veterans court, multicounty veterans court or veterans track may adopt local rules that are not inconsistent with either section 916 or any rules established by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania.

“Veterans track” is defined as a program that utilizes some components of a veterans court, including, but not limited to, treatment resources and veteran mentors and does not have the population and judicial resources to sustain a full veteran court.

This act shall take effect in 60 days.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Currently, there are approximately 116 problem-solving courts in operation in the Commonwealth. The appropriation for problem-solving courts during the current fiscal year is \$1.1 million, and the Governor’s Executive Budget proposal for FY 2020-21 maintains this level of funding. These funds are distributed to provide resources used to assist counties in managing these courts.

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According to the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts, there would be approximately \$100,000 in costs to the Commonwealth for startup funds as problem-solving courts expand under this legislation.