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Dykema and State Officials Tour Veterans Treatment Court

DEDHAM – On Tuesday, October 9th, 2012 a group of state legislators and officials visited the Norfolk County Veterans Treatment Court in Dedham to witness firsthand the court supervised program for defendants who have served in the United States Armed Forces.

The Norfolk County Veterans Treatment Court is a successful, voluntary 12-24 month program intended to serve veterans who are struggling with addiction, mental health issues and or/co-concurring disorders. The program involves ongoing judicial and probation supervision with input from a multidisciplinary team of professionals. The Court promotes sobriety, recovery and stability through a collaboration with VA and community based treatment providers. In addition, all participants are matched with a veteran peer mentor who will act as an advocate, mentor, and ally.

“I was proud to join colleagues on both sides of the aisle to pass the Valor Act this year, including a provision that I sponsored to strengthen support for veterans in our courts. But we are just beginning to address the challenges of helping veterans recover from the hidden wounds of war,” said Representative Dykema. “I’m pleased we had the chance to see some of the best practices in place in Norfolk County and to partner with Judge Mary Hogan Sullivan and her staff to examine how we can make this great program available to all our veterans, across the state.”

“This support that is given to our veterans through a coordinated effort is a wonderful model as we look towards implementing similar programs throughout the state,” said State Senator Mike Rush (Chairman, Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs). Judge Mary Hogan Sullivan, District Attorney Morrissey, and their staffs provide treatment options on a case by case basis to those who have served this country so admirably. The team of professionals does not give special treatment to these defendants, rather they develop a five- phase program for defendants to complete which involves strict sanctions for non-adherence.”

The Legislature recently passed into law the “VALOR Act” which included provisions sponsored by Representative Dykema for a statewide court diversion program. The purpose of the visit was to discuss the veteran court model being piloted in Norfolk County. By witnessing a successful program that has already been implemented, state policymakers will have the opportunity to adopt best practices and procedures to expand on this recent law.

Members of the Legislatures’ Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs, the Attorney General’s Office, and Adjutant General Scott Rice were in attendance.