SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION No. 146

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED APRIL 19, 2021

Sponsored by:
Senator STEVEN V. OROHO
District 24 (Morris, Sussex and Warren)
Senator RICHARD J. CODEY
District 27 (Essex and Morris)

Co-Sponsored by:
Senators Pennacchio, A.M.Bucco, Doherty and Corrado

SYNOPSIS

Urges federal Department of Veterans Affairs to establish Vet Center in Northwestern New Jersey.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 4/19/2021)

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION urging the federal Department of Veterans Affairs to establish a Vet Center in Northwestern New Jersey.

WHEREAS, Veterans in the State of New Jersey deserve high quality and accessible mental health care; and

WHEREAS, The United States has a long history of providing assistance to veterans, beginning in the colonial era; and

WHEREAS, During the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln signed a law to establish a national soldiers and sailors asylum, creating the blueprint for future VA hospitals; and

WHEREAS, In 1917, the United States Congress established a new system for veterans benefits, expanding services and providing soldiers returning from World War I with access to newly established hospitals that specifically addressed the needs of veterans; and

WHEREAS, After World War II, the population of veterans increased, leading the United States Congress to enact new benefits for veterans and to the modernization of the VA; and

WHEREAS, In 1979, the United States Congress recognized the mental health needs of veterans who had returned from Vietnam and created Vet Centers to provide mental health and readjustment services to veterans; and

WHEREAS, Vet Centers provide a broad range of counseling, outreach, and referral services to eligible veterans in order to help the veteran make a successful readjustment to civilian life; and

WHEREAS, Vet Centers provide veterans, service members, and their families with readjustment counseling including individual and group counseling, family counseling, bereavement counseling, military sexual trauma counseling and referral, and substance abuse assessment and referral, and with other medical and social services to assist veterans; and

WHEREAS, Separate from VA sites to ensure confidentiality of services and easy access to care, Vet Centers are located within the community to best serve veterans, service members, and their families; and

WHEREAS, There are currently five Vet Centers in New Jersey, none of which are located in the northwestern part of the State; and

WHEREAS, As of September 30, 2020, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs has estimated that about 40,000 veterans reside in Morris, Sussex, Warren, and Hunterdon counties; and

WHEREAS, The lack of a Vet Center in the northwestern part of the State creates a burden on veterans, service members, and their families who are forced to travel long distances or travel out of State to receive much needed mental health services; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED *by the Senate of the State of New Jersey (the General Assembly concurring):*

1. The Legislature of the State of New Jersey respectfully urges the federal Department of Veterans Affairs to establish a Vet Center in Northwestern New Jersey.

2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State, shall be transmitted by the Secretary of the Senate to the Director of the Veterans Affairs New Jersey Health Care System, to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and every member of Congress from this State.

STATEMENT

This resolution urges the federal Department of Veterans Affairs to establish a Vet Center in Northwestern New Jersey. The United States has a long history of providing services to veterans, beginning in colonial times and services available to veterans have continued to evolve with time. First established in 1979, Vet Centers offer community-based counseling and a wide range of social and psychological services. There are five Vet Centers in the State of New Jersey, none of which are located in the northwestern part of the State.

As of September 30, 2020, there were approximately 40,000 veterans residing in Morris, Sussex, Warren, and Hunterdon counties. Those veterans travel long distances or out-of-state to receive mental health care. The veterans' community in Sussex, Warren, Morris, and Hunterdon Counties has identified the need for an additional Vet Center in Northwestern New Jersey, which would help service the needs of New Jersey veterans, service members, and their families.