

San Francisco Veterans Affairs Commission

May 12, 2026 Meeting

**PUBLIC COMMENTS SUBMITTED IN SUPPORT OF “OLD BUSINESS” ACTIONABLE
AGENDA ITEM ABOUT VETERANS JUSTICE COURT.**

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May 8, 2026

**To the San Francisco Veteran Commission, San Francisco Veterans Justice Court, and
the City of San Francisco Human Services Agency**

I am writing as a military veteran with 29 years of service to strongly oppose the City’s proposed elimination of two critical positions supporting the San Francisco Veterans Justice Court.

Veterans, especially unhoused veterans and those struggling with mental health or substance abuse challenges, are an exceptionally vulnerable population that deserves support, compassion, and a fair opportunity to rebuild their lives. These are men and women who volunteered to serve this country at a time when only a small percentage of Americans are willing to do so. Regardless of where or how long someone served, military service changes people. Veterans are often exposed to trauma, stress, and experiences that most Americans will never fully understand.

The Veterans Justice Court exists because traditional criminal justice approaches often fail to address the root causes behind why some veterans end up in crisis. The court’s success depends on treatment, case management, accountability, and access to services, not simply punishment. Eliminating these two positions undermines the very support structure that allows the program to work.

I am also deeply concerned by the suggestion that Veterans Justice Court services should primarily focus on veterans already connected to VA benefits. That idea fundamentally misunderstands the veteran population.

Many veterans never seek VA benefits, even when they are entitled to them. Some believe they do not deserve assistance because others “had it worse.” Others were conditioned

during military service to simply endure hardship without asking for help. Some veterans leave the military under difficult circumstances and become disconnected from the systems designed to support them.

During my 29 years of service, I saw firsthand the military justice and administrative systems are not always fair or forgiving. Young servicemembers sometimes make mistakes that, in another environment, might result in little more than a warning or second chance. Under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, however, or because a command wants to “set an example,” a servicemember can receive a punitive discharge or leave service under other-than-honorable conditions that follow them for the rest of their lives. In some cases, I personally witnessed commands pursue servicemembers more aggressively because of personality conflicts or leadership failures within the system itself.

That does not excuse misconduct, but it does mean we should approach struggling veterans with empathy and perspective rather than indifference.

Veterans who fall on hard times still deserve dignity, support, and a pathway toward recovery. Removing these positions will not eliminate the need. It will simply shift the burden elsewhere; onto San Francisco’s courts, emergency rooms, law enforcement officers, homeless services, and public health systems. In the long run, these cuts are likely to cost the city far more than they save.

I understand the city faces difficult budget decisions and that savings must be found somewhere. However, eliminating frontline positions that directly support vulnerable veterans is shortsighted and harmful. The savings associated with these two positions could almost certainly be achieved through operational efficiencies or administrative adjustments elsewhere within the system without dismantling a program that is actively helping veterans regain stability and avoid deeper involvement in the justice system.

San Francisco has long presented itself as a city that values compassion, equity, and support for vulnerable populations. Veterans who served this nation should not be abandoned when they need that support the most.

I strongly urge city leaders to restore funding for these Veterans Justice Court positions and preserve this critical program.

Kind Regards,

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