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March 28, 2017

Senator Jeff Flake
Judiciary Committee
413 Senate Russell Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Flake,

On behalf of the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (APA), I am writing to express my support of the Veterans Court Improvement Act of 2017. APA is a private non-profit whose mission is to support and enhance the effectiveness of prosecutors in their mission to create safer communities. It serves as a forum for collaborating with our criminal justice partners across the globe; and to advocate on behalf of prosecutors on emerging issues related to the administration of justice.

A 2000 Bureau of Justice Statistics report found that prior to incarceration in jail or prison, 81% of veterans report drug use problems. Prior to incarceration in jail, 35% were identified as having current alcohol dependency, 23% were homeless at some point in the prior year, and 25% were identified as mentally ill. The initiation of Veteran Treatment Courts has been instrumental in treating veterans and reducing the recidivism rate among the veteran population.

The Veterans Court Improvement Act of 2017 recognizes the importance of Veteran Treatment Courts as well as Veteran Justice Outreach Specialists in providing services and treatment to veterans. By providing sufficient resources to these courts, this unique population will be best served, as will the communities that they live in.

As prosecutors, we are key stakeholders in the criminal justice system. We believe that prosecutors can be advocates and change agents for innovative criminal justice efforts, such as Veteran Treatment Courts. We proudly endorse this bill and its efforts. Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Respectfully Submitted,

David LaBahn
President and CEO