

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Interim – May-December:
1292 Sadler Way Rm. 323
Fairbanks, AK 99701
907-452-1088



Session – January-April:
State Capitol Rm 500
Juneau, AK 99801
907-465-3004

Representative Will Stapp

District 32: East Fairbanks, Fort Wainwright, Badger

Rep.Will.Stapp@akleg.gov

February 13, 2026

Sponsor Statement for HB 299 (34-LS1386\A)

Alaska is known as a veteran friendly state. It is home to the largest veteran population per capita in the United States making up 10% of the working aged population in the state.

Studies have shown that veterans who were exposed to service-related trauma, combined with incidents of mental health or substance use disorders from that trauma, have elevated risk of interacting with the criminal justice system. This statistic is further elevated by veterans who served after September 11, 2001, due to the significant increase in combat deployments and redeployments.

HB 299 attempts to address this issue by providing an option for veterans who encounter the criminal justice system to seek assistance for any service-related trauma they may be suffering from. It also aims to prevent such an encounter from severely impacting a veteran's ability to reintegrate into society as a model citizen.

Although the Alaska Court System does provide resources in the form of therapeutic courts for veterans located in Anchorage and Fairbanks, veterans encountering this program have varied experiences due to the fact they are often inaccessible to veterans or undesirable because of location, strict eligibility criteria, and insufficient incentives.

This bill is designed to ensure all veterans who become justice-involved in Alaska can access appropriate alternatives to incarceration/conviction. The U.S. Department of Justice estimates that Veterans Treatment Courts can help only 10-15% of justice-involved veterans due to the courts' high risk-high need model. HB 299 is designed to address the needs of the 85% of veterans who end up incarcerated or convicted, often preventing them from obtaining critical treatment for invisible injuries such as mental health conditions including post-traumatic stress disorder.

Staff Contact: Bernard Aoto
(907) 465-6541
Bernard.Aoto@akleg.gov