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Veterans: Special court makes practical sense

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There is a great deal of appeal in Public Defender Matt Shirk's proposal that a Veterans Treatment Court be established here.

The new entity, he says, would use federal dollars to provide military veterans, when arrested on criminal charges, with treatment for addiction and mental health problems.

A similar program was established in Buffalo, N.Y., a few years ago - and copied in more than two dozen communities since then.

An argument could be made that these expenses should be paid at the local level, not by a debt-ridden federal government.

But if the federal government wants to relieve Jacksonville of some expenses, during this time of mushrooming local budget deficits, let it. This isn't a question of whether the project is worthy; it's a matter of whether this city - or some other one - will get federal money for a needed program.

Besides, the federal government arguably has more responsibility than local entities for taking care of those who served in the military - and may have been damaged by that experience.

It makes sense to save some local tax dollars and, at the same time, help those who put their lives on the line for the entire nation.

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