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SEN. JACQUE'S 'PROBLEM-SOLVING' COURTS BILL CLEARS SENATE

Initiative reducing recidivism and promoting efficient dispute resolution heads to Assembly

MADISON, WI... Legislation enhancing public safety and efficiency in our justice system by establishing specialized “problem-solving” courts in state law, and providing substance abuse treatment to offenders is headed to the State Assembly after clearing the full Senate today.

State Sen. André Jacques (R-New Franken), author of the measure, said specialized courts for drug treatment, OWI offenses, commercial disputes and others have grown rapidly throughout the justice system.

“These courts work across multiple disciplines and institutions to use interventions that treat offenders while also holding them accountable for their criminal actions,” Sen. Jacques said. “The programs reduce recidivism, increase public safety, and relieve pressure on our court system by focusing our criminal justice resources on violent offenders who pose the greatest risk and must be removed from our communities.”

Since its creation in 2005 Act 25, Sen. Jacques said the Wisconsin’s Treatment Alternatives and Diversion (TAD) Grant Program has provided effective alternatives to incarceration for non-violent offenders who need treatment for substance abuse and addiction. The TAD program currently operates in approximately 50 counties and in two tribes.

“Substance addiction treatment courts enable non-violent offenders to voluntarily participate and receive drug treatment services instead of a jail or prison sentence,” Sen. Jacques said. “According to the Wisconsin Department of Justice, 97% of TAD graduates stayed out of state prison after completing their TAD program.”

Similarly, Sen. Jacques said the bill also provides for the statutory establishment of commercial courts, established in a 2017 Wisconsin Supreme Court pilot project dedicating circuit court judicial dockets for large-claim commercial cases. The Court has reauthorized and expanded it twice since in 2020 and 2022.

“The lack of specific authorization for treatment courts and business courts by state rule or statute leaves their future uncertain,” Sen. Jacques said. “Legislative action to recognize treatment and commercial courts within state statute will put in place a permanent system that decreases re-offenders and efficiently resolves commercial disputes, thereby providing more certainty for our economy.”

The measure ([Senate Bill 80](#)) must now pass the full Assembly and be signed by the Governor to become law.

Senator André Jacques represents Northeast Wisconsin’s First Senate District, consisting of Door and Kewaunee Counties and portions of Brown, Calumet, Manitowoc, and Outagamie counties.