



## **Sangamon County Circuit Court Clarifies County Oversight of Veterans Assistance Commissions**

**Decision Date:** October 7, 2025

**Case Nos.:** 2025-MR-90 and 2025-MR-91

**Court:** Circuit Court of the Seventh Judicial Circuit, Sangamon County

*The following summary was prepared to make counties aware of the recent circuit court decision. It is not intended to provide legal advice. County officials are encouraged to consult with their State's Attorney's office for any guidance about the ramifications of the circuit court decision.*

### **Background**

Sangamon County and the Sangamon County Veterans Assistance Commission (VAC) were engaged in a dispute over funding and administrative control under the Military Veterans Assistance Act (MVAA). The VAC argued that the County was required to appropriate a minimum of 0.02% of the county's equalized assessed value for its annual operations and that the County lacked authority to review or reduce its budget requests.

The County maintained that the VAC's funding requests were recommendations, not mandates, and that the County retained legal authority to determine the amount appropriated and oversee the use of public funds.

### **Summary of the Court's Ruling**

The Circuit Court ruled entirely in favor of Sangamon County, issuing the following key findings:

#### **1. No Automatic Minimum Appropriation**

- The court determined that Section 2(1)(B) of the MVAA does **not** require counties to automatically appropriate 0.02% of their assessed property value to the VAC.
- That figure represents a *funding source threshold* for potential use—not a mandatory appropriation.

#### **2. VAC Must Justify Requests**

- The VAC must submit a reasoned, good-faith budget recommendation demonstrating the *justice and necessity* of the requested funds before the County is obligated to appropriate them.

### 3. **County Oversight Affirmed**

- The County Board retains legal authority to decide whether VAC expenditures are *just, reasonable, and necessary* and to ensure compliance with county budgeting and procurement laws.
- The court emphasized that the County Board, as the elected body accountable to taxpayers, has the ultimate responsibility for public spending.

### 4. **Mandamus Relief Denied**

- The court denied the VAC's request to compel Sangamon County to appropriate \$739,686 for FY2025 and to pay attorney invoices, finding that the VAC failed to provide proof of the *justice and necessity* of those expenditures.

### 5. **VAC Must Follow County Policies**

- Under Section 9(g) of the MVAA, VACs must “adopt and adapt” county policies—including those related to budgeting, procurement, compensation, ethics, and administration—and cannot modify them in ways that render them ineffective.

## **Impact on County–VAC Relationships**

The decision provides clear judicial affirmation of counties' oversight role:

- **VACs make recommendations; counties appropriate.**

VACs cannot unilaterally direct appropriations or expenditures.

- **Counties retain fiduciary responsibility.**

County boards, as elected bodies, remain accountable to taxpayers for ensuring that all appropriations—including those to VACs—are justified and necessary.

- **VACs must comply with county systems.**

VACs must operate within established county administrative frameworks for budgeting, purchasing, personnel, and fiscal controls.

- **Mandamus standard clarified.**

VACs may seek judicial relief if they believe a county's appropriation is insufficient, but they must first prove, with evidence, that their request is *just and necessary* under the MVAA.

## **Implications for Other Counties**

Although this decision is binding only in Sangamon County, it is likely to have persuasive influence statewide:

- It offers the most detailed judicial interpretation to date of the 2023 amendments to the MVAA.

- Other circuit courts are expected to view this reasoning as authoritative unless and until an appellate court issues a contrary ruling.
- Counties across Illinois may cite this decision to:
  - Support their authority to review and adjust VAC funding requests;
  - Require detailed budget justifications from VACs; and
  - Ensure VAC operations conform with county budgeting and procurement policies.

## **Key Takeaways for County Officials**

- Counties are not required to automatically appropriate 0.02% of EAV to VACs.
- VACs must justify funding requests with documentation showing they are just and necessary.
- County boards maintain appropriation and oversight authority over all VAC expenditures.
- VACs must follow county policies under Section 9(g) of the MVAA.
- Mandamus actions require proof of justice and necessity—not merely the submission of a budget request.

## **Conclusion**

The *Sangamon County* ruling represents an important clarification of the balance of authority between county boards and Veterans Assistance Commissions. It affirms that counties retain oversight of public funds, that VACs must substantiate their budget requests, and that both entities should operate collaboratively within the statutory framework of the MVAA.

It remains unknown at the moment whether the decision will be appealed, although we anticipate this will likely occur. ISACo will continue to monitor developments on any legal proceedings.