

15 December 2007

Honorable Sheldon Silver
Speaker
New York State Assembly
Room 932 Legislative Office Building
Albany, New York 12248

Dear Mr. Speaker,

It is with great pleasure that I forward to you the 2007 Annual Report of the New York State Assembly Standing Committee on Veterans' Affairs. I had the honor of being the chair of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs for much of the 2007 legislative session. I congratulate Assemblyman Adriano Espaillat, who succeeded me as chair in June 2007 and wish him great success in that role.

Several significant measures became law this year. One measure creates an annual annuity of \$500 to qualified Gold Star Parents who have an income at or below two hundred percent of the Federal poverty level. Another law relates to the eligibility of veterans and qualified dependents for admission to New York State Veterans' nursing homes. The Legislature also passed and the Governor signed into law a bill that creates a Cold War Veterans real property tax exemption that municipalities may implement by passing a local law.

While much has been accomplished this year, much more remains to be done. In 2008 the Committee will focus on the returning veterans who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Committee also will examine issues facing homeless veterans and continue outreach to women veterans.

I wish to extend my appreciation and many thanks to the members of the Committee, the Committee staff, and the veterans of New York State and to you, Mr. Speaker, for your unwavering support for veterans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Felix W. Ortiz". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Felix W. Ortiz
Member of Assembly

**2007 ANNUAL REPORT
NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY
STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

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I. COMMITTEE JURISDICTION AND SUMMARY

The Assembly Standing Committee on Veterans' Affairs evaluates legislation affecting 1.1 million New York State residents who selflessly served their nation in the United States armed forces. This number includes the nearly 60,000 women veterans who volunteered to serve in the military. Their jobs have ranged from nurses to switchboard operators to combat positions. The Committee's work is geared toward safeguarding programs and promoting legislation to benefit veterans and their families. In addition, the Committee maintains an ongoing dialogue with the veterans' community and addresses developing issues affecting the lives of New York State veterans.

Veterans' issues impact a number of titles of New York State statute, principally: Civil Service Law, Executive Law, Military Law, Education Law, Real Property Tax Law, Public Health Law, and Retirement and Social Security Law. Amendments to the State Constitution that would affect veterans are also considered by the Committee. New York State currently offers a variety of veterans' assistance programs, including a real property tax exemption program, educational assistance for certain veterans and their family members, and a state veterans nursing home program.

This past Legislative session, the Committee held four meetings at which it considered 74 bills and resolutions. Ten bills passed both houses of the Legislature, six were signed into law and three were vetoed. One of the ten was the second passage of a resolution to amend the State Constitution (a proposed amendment must be passed by two successively elected legislatures before it appears on the ballot for voter approval). It will appear on the 2008 November ballot. The Committee was represented at the Veterans Outreach Center in Rochester, New York, Jewish War Veterans Post 105, and the Pearl Harbor Remembrance Ceremony in Albany, New York.

While the Standing Committee on Veterans' Affairs has jurisdiction over legislation that affects veterans' benefits and programs that help veterans and their families, the Committee does not work alone. Some initiatives advanced by individual veterans and organizations are referred to other standing committees, such as the committees on Energy, Transportation, Health, Corporations, Authorities and Commissions, and Mental Health. As a result, the Committee's chair, members, and staff must work closely with other committees to ensure that this unique population's needs are met. To meet this goal, the Committee may analyze legislation referenced to other Assembly standing committees and conduct joint public hearings with other committees.

II. 2007 LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

A. Admission to State Veterans' Nursing Homes

The federal Veterans Administration (VA) Home Program provides guidelines and regulations for State participation and stipulates the percentage and classification of veterans and non-veterans in the federally subsidized nursing home program eligible for admission to participating State veterans' homes. The VA makes per diem payments to participating States to compensate for care provided by veterans' homes to eligible veterans and provides funds for home construction. Failure to comply with VA regulations creates a risk that the VA will impose monetary sanctions by denying per diem payments and construction repayments.

VA Home Program (A.7530, Ortiz; Chapter 129 of the Laws of 2007)

This chapter authorizes admission of an eligible unremarried surviving spouse, and/or the mother or the father of any member of the armed forces of the United States to a New York State veterans' home upon approval of the application by the Board of Visitors. Additionally, this chapter changes the criteria for determining whether a spouse or unremarried surviving spouse of a veteran can be admitted to a New York State veterans' home by requiring that the marriage have lasted at least one year prior to the spouse's application for admission. This law affects the following New York State Veterans nursing homes: the New York State Home for Veterans and their dependents at Oxford; the New York State Home for Veterans in the City of New York (St. Albans); the New York State Home for Veterans in Western New York (Batavia) and the New York State Home for Veterans in the lower Hudson Valley (Montrose).

B. Merchant Marines

In 1947, the Legislature enacted Section 9701 of the Unconsolidated Laws providing war bonuses to members of the armed forces who served during World War II or their next of kin. Members of the armed forces included the Army, Navy, Army Air Corps, Marines, Coast Guard, Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, Women's Air Corps, WAVES, SPARS, Women Marines, Public Health Service, and Coast and Geodetic Survey.

In 1988, the Federal Government conferred veteran status upon Merchant Marines. In 1989 and 1991 the New York State Legislature amended various provisions of State law to extend to members of the Merchant Marines the right and privileges currently extended to veterans of the armed forces. Merchant Marines were an integral part of World War II. They suffered the highest casualty rate of any of the branches of service while they delivered troops, tanks, food, airplanes, fuel, and other needed supplies to every theater of the war.

Merchant Marine War Bonus (A.7857-A, Cusick; Chapter 325 of the Laws of 2007)

This chapter authorizes a one-time only bonus of \$250 dollars be provided to members of the Merchant Marines who were employed by the War Shipping Administration or Office of Defense Transportation or their agents as a merchant seaman or as a civil servant employed by the United States Army Transport Service (later redesignated as the United States Army Transportation Corps, Water Division) or the Naval Transportation Service. The Merchant Marine must have served satisfactorily as a crew member during the period of armed conflict, December 7, 1941, to

August 15,1945, aboard merchant vessels and have received a certificate of release or discharge from active duty and a discharge certificate, an honorable service certificate, or an honorable service certificate/report of casualty from the Department of Defense.

C. Gold Star Parents Annuity

Gold Star parents have made the ultimate sacrifice by giving up that which is most dear to them, thus advancing freedom for all at the cost of their children. These parents have inspired patriotic spirit in their children, encouraging them to serve for the greater good of our country. These parents who have lost children to the ravages of war are now unable to rely upon their children in their twilight years.

Gold Star Mothers (A. 6575, Towns; Chapter 399 of the Laws of 2007)

This chapter creates an annuity of \$500 upon application to the State Director of the Division of Veterans' Affairs for a parent who, pursuant to 10 USC 1126, is a gold star parent and has an income at or below two hundred percent of the federal poverty level.

D. Burial Fund

Many New York State veterans and their families have expressed their desire to be buried in their own community and in many cases, the burial grounds of their family members, religious community, and neighbors.

New York State Veterans Burial Fund (A. 6948, Brodsky; Chapter 652 of the Laws of 2007)

This chapter would authorize the New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs to institute a fund to provide grants to family members of honorably discharged veterans to offset the cost of burial and interment expenses at not-for-profit cemeteries.

E. Real Property Tax Exemptions

Veterans have been entitled to a real property tax exemption in some form since the Civil War. This benefit was developed to reward those veterans who served and sacrificed so that freedom could be enjoyed by all Americans. Over the years, reforms have been adopted to make exemptions more equitable. After World War I and until 1984, an "eligible funds" exemption was offered, which allowed wartime veterans to apply any federal pension, bonus, insurance, or other proceeds, up to \$5,000 of assessed value, toward the purchase of property. The degree of the exemption was determined by the amount of the "eligible funds" received. Since veterans of World War II received decidedly more "eligible funds" than those of Korea or Vietnam, the Legislature enacted the alternative exemption, Chapter 525 of the Laws of 1984, to make the program more uniform and equitable.

In 2007, the veterans who have served during the period of time between wars (World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf) encouraged the Legislature to adopt a real property tax exemption similar to that which is available to those who served during the times of war.

Two measures relating to property taxes were enacted to help veterans.

**1. Real Property Tax Exemption for Cold War Veterans
(A.583-A, Paulin; Chapter 655 Laws of 2007)**

This law allows municipalities to grant a real property tax exemption to Cold War veterans. A Cold War veteran is defined as a person who served on active duty for a period of more than 365 days in the United States Armed Forces from September 2, 1945, to December 26, 1991 and was discharged under honorable conditions. The measure provides for a 10 year limitation on exemptions beginning on January 3, 2008, or the date of acquisition of property, whichever is later.

**2. Assessment of Real Property Tax Exemption for the Hudson Veterans of
Foreign War Post 1314 (A.7171, Molinaro; Chapter 647 of the Laws of 2007)**

This law authorizes an application for an exemption, pursuant to Section 452 of the Real Property Tax Law for the 2005 assessment roll for a specified parcel of real property owned by the Hudson Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1314 to be accepted.

III. CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

Constitutional Amendment; Civil Service Exam (A4328, Ortiz; Second Passage Both Houses)

The Legislature passed a resolution to amend the state constitution to remove the requirement that a veteran who was disabled in the performance of duty in any war must receive disability payments from the United States Veterans Administration in order to qualify for additional civil service points and to allow the veteran to qualify for additional civil service points if he or she has been certified as disabled.

This amendment passed both houses in 2006 and 2007. Because this is the second passage by the Legislature, the amendment shall be submitted to the people for approval in November 2008.

IV. VETOED BILLS

A. Veterans' Geriatric Mental Health Act (A.5154, Ortiz; Veto Memo 13)

This measure would have created the Veteran's Geriatric Mental Health Act. It would have required the Director of the Division of Veterans' Affairs to develop, jointly with the Commissioner of the Office of Mental Health and the Director of the State Office of Aging, a Veteran's Geriatric Mental Health Demonstration Program. The legislation also would have created an interagency geriatric veterans mental health planning council.

In his veto message, the Governor noted that this bill duplicates his administration's ongoing efforts to provide assistance. The Governor argued that it is preferable to add the Adjutant General and the Director of Veterans' Affairs to the existing Interagency Geriatric Mental Health Planning Council. This will help ensure that the council pays close attention to the needs of this deserving population without expending scarce resources on another program and another planning council.

B. Veterans' Speaker Education Program (A.6574, Towns; Veto Memo 82)

This bill would have established within the Division of Veterans' Affairs a Speaker Education Program. New Yorkers, especially young people, should be aware of the contributions of the men and women who served our nation in the time of war.

The Governor vetoed the bill for several reasons. First, there are programs that preserve accounts of the wartime experience of veterans. Second, the NYSDVA does not have adequate funding or staff to implement the provisions of this bill. The mission of the NYSDVA is to assist New York State's veterans in receiving federal, state and local benefits to which they might be entitled. Implementing the provisions of this bill would have simply diverted resources from that core mission.

C. Real Property Tax Exemption for Veterans (A.1739, Tonko; Veto Memo 90)

This bill would have allowed a qualified veteran to apply for the veterans' real property tax exemption within 30 days of the purchase of property when purchased after the taxable status date or after the levy of taxes. Guidelines would have been established for a review and complaint process for such applications. The bill would have also established a formula that assessors could have used to determine the exemption for property purchased after the taxable status date but before the levy of taxes and would have allowed municipalities to opt for this method of recomputing the exemption.

V. BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

A. The Division of Veterans' Affairs

1. Veterans' Counseling

The Division of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) operates three principal programs. The largest is the Veterans' Counseling Program, which provides counseling and claims services through a statewide network of State veterans' counselors. The counselors, all of whom are veterans, and support staff help veterans complete and file applications for state, federal, and private benefits and services. Counselors also service constituents through outreach to Veterans' Affairs medical centers, senior centers, state veterans' nursing homes and local nursing homes, and public assistance offices. With the enactment of the New York Patriot Plan in 2003, State veterans' counselors help to ensure that active duty military personnel and their families receive the supplemental benefits to which they are now entitled.

State veterans' counselors receive professional training in veterans' benefits counseling. When successfully completed, a certificate is awarded to allow these counselors to assist individual veterans to file claims with the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs. Counselors receive on-going training, as well as technical information and manuals.

In the 2007-08 State budget \$5,428,000 was appropriated for services and expenses related to veterans' counseling and outreach.

2. Blind Veterans' Annuity Assistance

In 2000, Chapter 453 raised the New York State Blind Veterans' Annuity Program stipend from \$500 to \$1,000 a year. The benefit was first created in 1913, and the 2000 chapter was the first time the benefit was increased. Chapter 251 of the Laws of 2004 allows for the annual adjustment of the annuity now payable plus a percentage increase, if any, for compensation and pension benefits administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs in the previous year. The Director of the Division of Veterans' Affairs must publish by February first of each year the amount of the adjusted annuity.

The State Budget appropriated \$5,200,000 to this vital program. The blind veterans receive \$91.94 per month (2007 rate). Up to \$15,000 of the appropriation may be transferred to state operations for postage costs associated with this program.

3. Veterans' Education Program

The Veterans' Education Bureau approves and supervises educational institutions offering programs for veterans and other eligible persons. According to federal law, no veteran can receive G.I. educational benefits, such as those granted pursuant to the Montgomery G.I. Bill, unless the program in which the veteran is enrolled has been approved and is supervised by a state-approved agency.

The Budget included a \$1,800,000 federal operating grant to operate this program.

4. County and City Veterans' Service Agencies

County and city Veterans' Service Agencies are mandated by state law to inform members of the armed forces, reserves, and organized militia, veterans, and their families about education, retraining, medical, and other rehabilitative services and facilities. They are also mandated to inform veterans and their families about federal, state, and local laws and regulations pertaining to their rights. In the budget for SFY 2007-2008, the Legislature allocated \$680,000 for this program.

5. Veterans Outreach Center (VOC) in Rochester

The budget proposed by the Executive removed an appropriation that had been expressly included for the past nine years to support the Veterans Outreach Center in Rochester, New York. While the proposed Executive Budget would have funded all city and county veterans service agencies at \$930,000, there was no amount dedicated to the Rochester Veterans' Outreach Center.

The goal of the Veterans' Outreach Center (VOC) in Rochester is to improve the quality of life for veterans by offering free, veteran-specific services through continued care designed to nurture individual potential and provide support for building a better future. This includes counseling services for successful reintegration of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans into the community, short term psychotherapy for veterans and their immediate families, residential programs for homeless veterans and an alternatives to incarceration program through the unified drug court system.

The Legislature restored to the Division's budget the specific line item in the amount of \$250,000 for the VOC in Rochester.

6. New York State Supplemental Burial Benefits

Pursuant to Chapter 106 of the Laws of 2003, New York State offers a supplemental burial benefits program to eligible families of military personnel killed in combat or duty subject to hostile fire or imminent danger, as defined in 37 U.S.C. Section 310(a)(4). In the adopted budget, \$200,000 was included for this program and for transfer of such amounts as are necessary to state operations for related administrative expenses.

B. Division of Military and Naval Affairs

1. Recruitment Incentive and Retention Program

Chapter 268 of the Laws of 1996 established the Recruitment Incentive and Retention Program to provide eligible members of the New York Army National Guard, the New York Air National Guard, and the New York Naval Militia with a tuition benefit for undergraduate study.

In the budget for 2007-2008 \$3,300,000 was included for this vital program.

2. NYS Military Museum and Veterans' Research Center

The New York State Military Museum and Veterans' Research Center is located at the Saratoga Armory in Saratoga Springs, New York.

In the budget for SFY 2007-2008, \$1,000,000 was appropriated for services and expenses related to youth academic and drug reduction programs, the New York State Military Museum and Veteran's Research Center, and the preservation of historic artifacts.

C. Veterans' Enhanced Treatment Services (VETS)

Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services

In Fiscal Year 2006-07, the Executive created, under the jurisdiction of the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, the Veterans' Enhanced Treatment Services (VETS) Program. The budget included \$2 million in new local assistance funding to create 50 residential treatment beds, primarily for veterans returning to New York from Iraq and Afghanistan. It opened in October 2006 and is located at the Samaritan Village in Queens, New York.

The Governor's proposed budget for 2007-08 recommends \$25.4 million in bonded capital funding to expand the VETS initiatives by adding 100 new intensive and community residential beds, primarily for both men (50) and women (50) returning home from the war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Legislature concurred with the Executive Proposal to expand the VETS initiative.

VI. BILLS THAT PASSED THE ASSEMBLY ONLY

A. Veterans' Affairs Committee

1. Exemption from Real Property Tax for a Person Certified To Receive Disability Pension (A.4696, Schroeder; Passed Assembly)

The bill would exempt from real property taxation real property owned by a person certified to receive a Department of Veterans Affairs disability pension, pursuant to 38 U.S.C., Section 1521, and allow an award letter from the Department of Veterans' Affairs to be submitted as proof of the disability.

2. Cold War Service Medal (A.5156-A, Ortiz; Passed Assembly)

This bill would authorize the issuance of a Cold War Service Medal to those veterans who served in the United States Armed Forces from September 2, 1945, to December 26, 1991.

B. Other Committees

1. Aging Committee

Senior Citizen Tax Abatement (A.7244, Bing; Passed Assembly)

This bill would include persons with disabilities, including a person receiving disability compensation from the United States Department of Veterans' Affairs, within the definition of head of household for the senior citizens' tax abatement for rent-controlled and regulated property.

2. Governmental Employees Committee

Disabled Veteran (A.2398, Morelle; Passed Assembly)

This bill would amend the Civil Service Law to allow a belated application for an additional credit as a veteran or disabled veteran by an applicant who has been placed on an eligible list for State employment but, subsequent to such placement, has been ordered to active military duty to a combat theater or combat zone of operations that qualifies such applicant for the additional credit as a veteran or disabled veteran. The applicant must make the application within two months after receiving an honorable discharge or being released under honorable circumstances.

3. Governmental Operations Committee

Additional Military Leave (A.6533, Towns; Passed Assembly)

This bill would authorize an additional 30 days military leave for public employees who are absent on military leave.

4. Higher Education Committee

Transition Assistance Program Benefit (A.1929-A, Canestrari; Passed Assembly)

The bill would allow adjustments to income when calculating a TAP benefit if the parent, spouse, or legal guardian is called to active service.

5. Local Governments Committee

Increase Annual Appropriations for Patriotic Organizations (A.6572, Towns; Passed Assembly)

This measure would permit towns to increase from \$125 to \$300 the annual appropriation to defray the costs of rooms for patriotic organizations in an adjoining town when the town does not have a post within its boundaries. The bill also would allow a town board to appropriate a sum not exceeding \$1,000 for each post in any year for the purpose of holding meetings.

6. Transportation Committee

License Plates (A.6479-A, Magnarelli; Passed Assembly)

This measure would eliminate the one-time service charge for the issuance of distinctive plates for members of the New York State militia.

VII. BILLS REPORTED BY OTHER COMMITTEES THAT BECAME LAW

A. Election Law Committee

Military Ballots (A.8130, Carrozza; Chapter 254 of the Laws of 2007)

This measure extends the time in the Board of Elections to receive military ballots to seven days after the primary election and 13 days after a general election and a presidential primary.

B. Governmental Operations Committee

Transfer of State land for Veterans' Cemetery (A.6498-B, Morelle; Chapter 308 of the Laws of 2007)

This bill would transfer 100 acres at the Sampson State Park to Seneca County in order to establish a veterans' cemetery. The proposed cemetery would be within the park, surrounded by state park lands, and connected to park roads and the other infrastructure, including the Navy and Air Force museums on the grounds. In last year's budget, \$500,000 was included to develop the land.

C. Housing Committee

Preference to Disabled Veterans in Mitchell Lama Projects (A.5812-A, Towns; Chapter 420 of the Laws of 2007)

This law grants a preference to disabled veterans for the purpose of occupancy in a Mitchell Lama project. It gives disabled veterans the same preference as displaced families.

D. Labor Committee

Military Spouse Ten Days Leave (A.6024, Cusick; Chapter 516 of the Laws of 2007)

This bill provides that spouses of members of the United States National Guard and reservists who have been deployed during a period of military conflict shall be allowed up to ten days unpaid leave from their employment to include those working for the State of New York.

VIII. HONORING VETERANS THROUGH LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTIONS

A. U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability (K 566, Espallat)

This resolution urges President George W. Bush to reconsider his stated intention to veto H.R. 1591 and to sign this important legislation into law. H.R. 1591 includes a timetable to redeploy U.S. troops in Iraq paired with the progress made by the Iraqi government in meeting diplomatic and security benchmarks.

B. Full Funding for Veterans' Health Care (K 561, Ortiz; K 130, John)

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs' mission and motto is "to care for him who has borne the battle, and for his widow and orphan." Although legislative bodies at all levels of our government have recognized the importance of supporting those who serve our great country, such legislation alone has fallen short of meeting the health care needs of our veterans. These resolutions would support the full funding for our nation's veterans' health care services.

C. Traumatic Brain Injury Enhancement (K 811, Ortiz)

This resolution urges Congress to enact H.R. 2199, the Traumatic Brain Injury Health Enhancement and Long-Term Support Act of 2007. It would expand the health care available to veterans with traumatic brain injuries and would create pilot programs that would provide mental health care services to veterans in rural areas.

D. Perpetual Purple Heart Stamp Act (K 810, Stirpe)

The Purple Heart is the oldest military decoration in the world still used today. The Purple Heart postage stamp was first issued by the United States Postal Service on May 30, 2003; it honors the sacrifices of the brave men and women of the armed forces who have been awarded the Purple Heart Medal. This resolution urges Congress to pass H.R. 2302, the Perpetual Purple Heart Stamp Act. It would require the Postmaster General to provide for the issuance of a forever stamp suitable to honor the sacrifices of the brave men and women of the armed forces who have been awarded the Purple Heart Medal.

E. Belated Thank You to the Merchant Marines (K 591, Cusick)

The Merchant Marines were an integral part of World War II. They suffered the highest casualty rate of any of the branches of service while they delivered troops, tanks, food, airplanes, fuel, and other needed supplies. Without the services of the Merchant Marines, it would have been very difficult, if not impossible, to win World War II. This resolution urges Congress to pass H.R. 23, A Belated Thank You to the Merchant Marine of World War II Act of 2007.

F. Tuskegee Airmen Congressional Gold Medal (K 575, Towns)

The “Tuskegee Airmen” was the popular name of a group of African American pilots who flew with distinction during World War II as the 332nd Fighter Group of the U.S. Army Air Corps. This resolution would pay tribute to the Tuskegee Airmen for the courage, bravery, service, and dedication to the United States Army in times of peace and war.

G. Commemorating the United States Air Force 60th Anniversary (K 971, Towns)

The United States Air Force (USAF) is the aerial warfare branch of the United States Armed Forces. It is the largest and most technologically advanced air force in the world. The mission of the USAF is to deliver sovereign options for the defense of the United States of America and its global interests to fly and fight in air, space, and cyberspace. This resolution commends the United States Air Force on its 60th anniversary.

H. Commemorating the Military Order of the Purple Heart 75th Anniversary (K 787, Schimel)

The men and women of our armed forces who have received the Purple Heart have gone above and beyond the call of duty in order to help preserve America’s freedom. The sacrifices made by these men and women have helped create and strengthen our nation. This resolution commends the Military Order of the Purple Heart’s 75th anniversary and commends recipients of the Purple Heart for their courageous demonstrations of gallantry and heroism.

I. Commemorating the Vietnam Veterans Memorial 25th Anniversary (K 571, Ortiz)

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., is a 493 feet long black granite wall, rising from the ground to 10.1 feet in height at the center, in a 125.12 degree angle. On its polished center are engraved the names of more than 58,000 members of the United States Armed Forces who died during or who remain missing from the Vietnam War. This resolution commemorates the 25th anniversary of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

J. Commemorating the Tri-County Council Vietnam Veterans’ 25th Anniversary (K 304, Canestrari)

The Tri-County Council Vietnam Era Veterans, founded in 1982 by capital area veterans, is an unaffiliated veterans’ organization offering membership to those who served on active duty in the United States military during the Vietnam era, from May 1, 1959 to May 7, 1975, and anyone who has served since May 7, 1975 or who is still serving on active duty in the United States military, including Panama, Grenada, Desert Storm, Lebanon, Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq veterans. This resolution commends the Tri-County Council Vietnam Veterans on its 25th anniversary, and recognizes its tradition of excellence in meeting the needs of veterans.

**K. Honoring Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 82, Nassau County
25th Anniversary (K 970, Schimel)**

Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 82, Nassau County, is an organization which, through its devotion and achievement, has been instrumental in the protection of their fellow Americans and unselfish in service to our country. This resolution honors its 25th anniversary.

L. Commemorating the 10th Anniversary of the Commissioning of the USS The Sullivans (K 773, Cusick)

The USS The Sullivans (DDG-68) is named to honor five brothers from Waterloo, Iowa, who served together on the USS Juneau during World War II. Adamant about serving together in spite of the Navy wartime policy to separate family members, the Sullivan brothers, George, Francis, Joseph, Madison and Albert, lost their lives during the Battle of Guadalcanal on November 13, 1942. Commissioned on Staten Island, New York, on April 19, 1997, to continue the Navy's tradition of honoring the five Sullivan brothers, the motto of the USS The Sullivans is "We Stick Together." The ship's homeport is Mayport, Florida, and currently serves in the Atlantic Fleet. This resolution commemorates the 10th anniversary of the USS The Sullivans.

M. Commemorating June 14th as Flag Day, and June 22nd as the 65th Anniversary of the Official Recognition of the Pledge of Allegiance (K 915, Espailat)

This resolution commemorates June 14th as Flag Day, and June 22nd as the 65th anniversary of the official recognition of the Pledge of Allegiance. The Pledge of Allegiance was written by Francis Bellamy in 1892 but did not receive official recognition by the United States Congress until June 22, 1942, when it was included in the United States Flag Code.

N. Commending the Wounded Warrior Project (K 623, McEneny)

Founded on the principle that veterans are our nation's greatest citizens, the Wounded Warrior Project seeks to assist those men and women of our armed forces who have been severely injured during the conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other locations around the world. This resolution commends the Wounded Warrior Project for its dedicated service on behalf of the veterans of New York State.

O. The Silver Rose Award (K 839, Butler)

The mission of the Order of The Silver Rose is to recognize the courage, heroism, and contributions of American service personnel found to have been exposed to Agent Orange while serving in a combat zone, and to bring this to the attention of the veteran and civilian communities. This award supports the well-deserving American veterans who served faithfully in Vietnam and were exposed to Agent Orange. This resolution supports the Order of the Silver Rose.

P. Honoring the Life and Accomplishment of Lloyd Brown, Last Known U.S. Navy Veteran to Fight in World War I (K 574, Ortiz)

Mr. Brown was the fourth of nine children; he was born on October 7, 1901, in Lutie, Missouri, a small farming town in the Ozark Mountains. In 1918, a 16 year old Brown lied about his age to join the Navy, and was soon a member of the crew aboard the battleship USS New Hampshire. Lloyd Brown ended his military career in 1925, and then joined the Washington Fire Department's Engine Company 16, which served the White House and embassies. His great personal sacrifices for world peace are deserving of this special tribute. This resolution pays tribute to the life and accomplishments of Lloyd Brown.

Q. Honoring the Life and Accomplishment of Charlotte Winters, a Distinguished World War I Veteran (K 573, Ortiz)

In 1916, Charlotte Winters met with the Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels, to persuade him to allow women in the service. Upon the Navy opening support roles to women, Charlotte Winters and her sister Sophie joined immediately. By December 1918, the Naval District reported more than 11,000 women had enlisted and were serving in support positions throughout the United States Navy. Charlotte Winters served as a secretary and retired in 1953 with the rank of Yeoman in the United States Naval Reserve. This resolution pays tribute to the life and accomplishments of Charlotte Winters.

R. Honoring the Life and Accomplishment of William Hallett Greene, the First Black Graduate of the City University of New York, and Member of the United States Army Signal Corps (K 910, Towns)

On June 26, 1884, William Hallett Greene received a Bachelor of Science degree from the Academy of Music, becoming the first black graduate of the City University of New York. Before completing his degree, Mr. Greene applied to the highly competitive United States Army Signal Corps; upon acceptance, he became the first black member in this unit. William Hallett Greene was initially rejected by Signal Corps Commander General William Hazen because blacks were restricted to certain regiments, even though Mr. Green had scored highly on written entrance exams. Upon receipt of this news, Greene turned to Alexander Webb, his college's president and a former Army General, who responded by writing to the Secretary of War, Robert Todd Lincoln, telling him of William Hallett Greene's many attributes and that he believed General Hazen had erred in his interpretation of the Army Reorganization Act. Agreeing with Alexander Webb, Robert Todd Lincoln ordered General Hazen to accept William Hallett Greene into the United States Army Signal Corps. This resolution pays tribute to the life and accomplishments of William Hallett Greene.

S. Mourning the Death of Andrew H. Wilkinson, Prominent Veterans' Activist (K 1040, McEneny)

Andrew H. Wilkinson was born in Albany, New York on April 13, 1933. He served in the United States Air Force for 23 years, retiring as a Master Sergeant after 19 base assignments and 13 years overseas. During 1966-1967, he served in Vietnam with the 1876th Communications Squadron at Tan Son Nhut Airbase. A founding member, past board member, and life member of Tri County Council Vietnam Era Veterans, Andrew H. Wilkinson chaired the organization's Hospital Oversight and Agent Orange/Dioxin committees. Andrew H. Wilkinson's commitment

to excellence and his spirit of humanity carried over into all fields of enterprise, including charitable and civic endeavors. This resolution honors Mr. Wilkinson as a veteran and devoted member of his community.

T. Paying Tribute to the Life and Memory of Lieutenant Heinz Ahlmeyer, Jr. (K 690, Jaffee)

A native of Pearl River, New York, Lieutenant Heinz Ahlmeyer, Jr. attended Pearl River High School, where he played football and baseball, and graduated from the State University of New York at New Paltz before joining the United States Marine Corps. On May 10, 1967, Lt. Heinz Ahlmeyer, Jr. was on a reconnaissance patrol in the Quang Tri province of Vietnam when he and the six Marines under his command came under attack and were presumed dead. Due to the intense and unrelenting enemy fire, his body could not be recovered. Lt. Ahlmeyer, Jr., remained missing in action for 37 years, until his remains were recovered in 2005, exactly 38 years from the date of his death. On May 10, 2005, he was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia. This resolution honors Lieutenant Heinz Ahlmeyer, Jr.'s life and his ultimate sacrifice in the Vietnam War.

U. Mourning the Death of Captain James G. Fitz Gerald (K 329, Seminerio)

Captain James G. Fitz Gerald was born on April 16, 1929, in Brooklyn, New York. He enlisted in the Naval Reserve in 1948, while attending St. John's University, Brooklyn, New York. Upon graduation in 1951 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics and Political Science, Ensign Fitz Gerald entered active service aboard the USS Wisconsin, where he served in Korean waters during the Korean War. Regarded as a dynamic speaker, Captain Fitz Gerald traveled throughout the United States making special appearances on behalf of Navy recruiting. He was often referred to as Mr. Navy. This resolution honors his many accomplishments while serving as a respected Naval Officer.

V. Commemorating the Memorial Service Honoring Two U.S. Army Air Force B-17 Crews (K 689, P. Lopez)

This resolution commemorates the two United States Army Air Force B-17 crews that were shot down while on bombing missions during World War II. Additionally, it expresses the appreciation to the people and government of France. The first B-17 crew was shot down and crashed near Bricquebec, France, and the second near the neighboring town of Rocheville, France. These citizens of Bricquebec and Rocheville generously erected a monument in memory of the crews of the two aircraft, honoring men they had never met but knowing their efforts were courageous and gallant and that their memories were surely cherished by others. This resolution honors the memory of the two United States Army Air Force B-17 crews and expresses sincere appreciation to the citizens of Bricquebec and Rocheville and the people and government of France.

W. Honoring the Corps of Cadets at West Point Upon the Occasion of Its Designation as Grand Marshal of the 2007 Village of Highland Falls Fourth of July Parade (K 926, Calhoun)

This resolution honors the United States Military Academy at West Point. Additionally, it commemorates the 2007 Village of Highland Falls Fourth of July Parade, and applauds and honors the Corps of Cadets at West Point upon the occasion of its designation as Grand Marshal of the parade.

IX. MEMORIALIZING THE GOVERNOR TO PROCLAIM VETERAN-RELATED EVENTS

A. Memorializing Governor Eliot Spitzer to Proclaim August 18-26, 2007 as Battle of Brooklyn Week in the State of New York (K 812, Brennan)

This resolution would honor the Maryland 400 Brigade and highlight the intertwined histories of Ireland and America in its annual March parade, and in August at the annual Green-Wood Cemetery ceremony which commemorates the anniversary of the Battle of Brooklyn.

B. Memorializing Governor Eliot Spitzer to Declare September 2007 as Armed Service Vocational Aptitude Battery Career Exploration Month in the State of New York (K 368, Ortiz)

The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) is a comprehensive career aptitude evaluation and development program that is available to schools free of cost. The ASVAB provides useful career aptitude data to students, parents and school officials. The availability of this effective career counseling service, at no cost, makes the ASVAB a desirable part of this State's overall education system.

C. Memorializing Governor Eliot Spitzer to Declare November 2007 as Military Family Appreciation Month in the State of New York (K 989, Espailat)

Military families are diverse, strong, resourceful and patriotic. The men and women who serve our country understand that their families provide essential support and make enormous sacrifices every day. We must also recognize the unselfish contributions of our military families, wherever they may be around the world.

D. Memorializing Governor Eliot Spitzer to Declare July 31, 2007 as John Ericsson Day in the State of New York (K 968, Gottfried)

John Ericsson is one of the 19th Century's most creative engineers and inventors. He came to New York City in 1839 for the same reason as many other immigrants, to pursue his dreams. He designed both the USS Princeton, a propeller-driven steam vessel that was one of the most advanced warships of its time, and the USS Monitor, an armored ship built in Greenpoint in Brooklyn, New York, which played a vital role in the Union's naval efforts during the Civil War. This resolution acknowledges the significant role that longtime New Yorker John Ericsson played in the history of our great State and nation. Additionally, it recognizes the advancement of science and the maritime industry, and memorializes the Governor to declare July 31, 2007, John Ericsson's birthday, as John Ericsson Day in the State of New York.

E. Memorializing Governor Eliot Spitzer to Declare October 2007 as Agent Orange Awareness Month (K 967, Espailat)

Agent Orange, considered one of the most toxic substances ever made, is an herbicide that includes artificial plant hormones and the extremely dangerous chemical known as dioxin. The continued effects of these exposures have been demonstrated in a Veteran Administration mortality study, which has shown correlation between Agent Orange exposure and non-

Hodgkins lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease, respiratory cancers, soft-tissue sarcoma, chloracne, Type 2 diabetes, prostate cancer, chloracne (skin disorder) multiple myeloma, and nerve disorder. Due to the link between Agent Orange and cancer in those who were exposed to it, and it being that October has been designated nationally as Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, and Colon Cancer Awareness Month, it logically follows that October also should be the month to raise awareness of the effects of exposure to Agent Orange.

F. Memorializing Governor Eliot Spitzer to Declare June 25, 2007 as “Korean War Veterans Day” (K 951, Young)

On June 25, 1950, Communist North Korea invaded South Korea with approximately 135,000 troops, thereby initiating the Korean War. Approximately 5,720,000 members of the Armed Forces served during the Korean War, of which 482,000 were from New York State, to defeat the spread of communism in Korea and throughout the world. The Korean War was the first deployment of United States troops to a combat zone to contain communist aggression.

G. Memorializing Governor Eliot Spitzer to Declare May 10, 2007 as “Rosie the Riveter Day” (K 565, Raia)

This day would recognize the devoted efforts of the women heroes in the United States who left their homes, children, and families to support the soldiers of World War II. When our State and nation needed them most, they went and worked in industrial jobs that challenged traditional notions about women's capabilities; subsequently, these women opened doors for all women and became a valuable part of history. As a Rosie the Riveter, these outstanding women became cultural icons in the United States during World War II, and deserve the recognition and honor of being heroes to a grateful State and nation.

X. HONORING SERVICEMEN AND WOMEN THROUGH LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTIONS

A. Honoring Captain Ronald Horton for His Outstanding Achievements as a Member of the United States Navy (K 351, Alessi)

Captain Ronald Horton was selected for major command at sea in September 2000 and began nuclear power training in May 2001. Captain Horton then served as executive officer aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) from January 2003 until September 2004, when he participated in Operation Iraqi Freedom and hosted the President of the United States. In December 2004, Captain Ronald Horton took command of the USS Juneau (LPD 10), a part of Amphibious Forces' Seventh Fleet, whose homeport is Sasebo, Japan. During his tour he participated in operations Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom, and Enduring Freedom-Philippines. Additionally, Captain Horton has received numerous military awards throughout his distinguished career. This resolution honors Captain Ronald Horton's outstanding achievements.

B. Honoring Rick Yarosh of Windsor, New York, Upon the Occasion of His Brave Homecoming from Iraq (K 1082, Crouch)

On September 1, 2006, while serving in Iraq as a Cavalry Scout in the United States Army, Rick Yarosh was critically injured and recovered at the Brook Army Medical Center in Fort Sam Houston, Texas. An inspiration to all, Rick Yarosh has proven that with the support of family, friends and community, our spirit recovers and becomes stronger. This resolution honors Mr. Yarosh on his homecoming from Iraq.

C. Commending Sergeant Ryan Taylor for His Valiant Military Service During Operation Iraqi Freedom (K 159, Oaks)

While on patrol in Afghanistan, Sergeant Ryan Taylor and his company were searching for roadside bombs with military police, Army intelligence personnel and Afghan national police officers. On February 22, 2006, an improvised explosive device was deployed. Acting with great courage, Sergeant Ryan Taylor threw himself on top of two Afghan police officers to shield them from shrapnel from the blast and ensure their safety. For his actions, Sergeant Ryan Taylor received the Bronze Star with Valor, the nation's fourth-highest combat award. This resolution commends Sergeant Taylor on his valiant military service during Operation Enduring Freedom.

D. Honoring Norwich Police Chief Joseph G. Angelino for Receiving Two Purple Hearts for Injuries Sustained in Iraq (K 496, Crouch)

Sergeant Major Joseph G. Angelino, a Marine reservist and three-time Iraq war veteran, has been a Marine for more than 20 years. Sergeant Major Angelino was First Sergeant in serving as a member of Company F, Second Battalion, 25th Marines. He was first wounded on September 5, 2005, by an improvised explosive device while traveling to assist a Marine patrol that had been ambushed by small arms fire in Anbar Province, Iraq. He sustained his second injury on September 30, 2005, during an enemy mortar attack on his company's base camp, Camp Habbaniyah, while he was still recovering from the first wound. This resolution honors Norwich Police Chief Joseph G. Angelino for receiving two Purple Hearts for injuries he suffered in Iraq.

E. Mourning the Untimely Death of Several Men and Women Who Died In Iraq and Afghanistan

Five resolutions were adopted to honor the men and women who were residents of New York State serving in the United States Armed Forces and were killed in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Specialist Jason Denfrund
Private Shawn Falter
Specialist David L. Roystum
Corporal Jason L. Dunham
Lieutenant Michael P. Murphy

K 16 Giglio
K 81 Finch
K 459 Ortiz
K 462 Ortiz
K 1076 Eddington

XI. OTHER ACTIVITIES BY THE COMMITTEE

A. Subcommittee on Women Veterans

The Subcommittee on Women Veterans sponsored the 13th annual Women Veterans' Recognition Day in the Assembly. This year the Subcommittee honored women veterans who served as military nurses. The history of women's service in America's military conflicts is as old as our independence and as timeless as our reverence of freedom and democracy. Historically, women's involvement in the military has surged in wartime. Between World War II and Vietnam, women comprised two percent of the armed forces; as recently as the 1991 Gulf War, the figure increased to 11 percent. As of 2007, there are 50,000 females serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. Women make up 15 percent of the military. Nursing the sick, wounded, and dying GI's during Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan is very different than it was in World War II and Korea. Expressly honored were: Retired Major Helen Vartigan; Retired Lieutenant (jg) Grace Roznowski; Retired Lieutenant Colonel Peggy Phillips; Retired 1st Lieutenant Frances Iwanski; and Retired Major Jacqueline DeGraw.

Assembly Resolution 891 by Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo, the Chair of the Subcommittee on Women Veterans, was adopted memorializing Governor Eliot Spitzer to proclaim June 12, 2007, as "Women Veterans Recognition Day" in the State of New York.

A second resolution was adopted to commemorate the 65th Anniversary of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). WAAC was established to work with the Army for the purpose of making available to the national defense the knowledge, skill, and special training of the women of the nation. Women joined the WAAC for a variety of reasons, but nearly all professed the desire to aid their country by "releasing a man for combat duty." (**K 894, Lupardo**)

B. Medal of Honor Recipients From New York State

The Congressional Medal of Honor is the highest award that can be bestowed on a member of the Armed Forces for valor in action against an enemy force. The Medal of Honor is awarded by the President, in the name of the Congress, to members of the military who have distinguished themselves conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of their lives above and beyond the call of duty. In 2007, two Medals of Honor were awarded posthumously to a Marine and Navy SEAL from New York State.

Corporal Jason L. Dunham, United States Marine Corps, was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor on January 11, 2007. Corporal Dunham served with the 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, Marine Expeditionary Force 29. On April 14, 2004, Corporal Dunham was manning a checkpoint in Karabilah, Iraq, when an insurgent leapt from his car and attacked Dunham. A scuffle ensued as two Marines approached to help. Suddenly, when the insurgent dropped a grenade, Corporal Dunham took off his helmet, dropped to the ground, and covered the explosive as best he could. The blast wounded all three Marines. Eight days later Dunham died at Bethesda Naval Hospital, succumbing to the wounds he received from the incident. Corporal Jason L. Dunham was from Scio, New York. (**K 462, Ortiz**)

Navy SEAL Lieutenant Michael P. Murphy was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor on October 22, 2007. The first United States Navy SEAL since the Vietnam War to be awarded the Medal of Honor, Lieutenant Murphy is the third recipient since troops were sent to Afghanistan in 2001. On June 28, 2005, Lieutenant Murphy was the officer-in-charge of a four-man SEAL element in support of Operation Red Wing tasked with finding a key anti-coalition militia commander near Asadabad, Afghanistan, when their mission was compromised. A fierce firefight ensued, with more than 50 anti-coalition militia firing on the Navy SEAL team. Despite the intensity of the firefight and suffering from grave wounds himself, Murphy risked his own life to save the lives of his comrades by moving into the open for a better position to transmit a call for help. While continuing to be fired upon, Murphy provided the location of his unit and the size of the enemy force and requested immediate support for his team. At one point, Lieutenant Murphy was shot, causing him to drop the transmitter; he picked it back up and completed the call while continuing to fire upon the enemy. Severely wounded, Murphy returned to his cover position, where he continued the battle with his team. At the end of the two-hour firefight, he and two of his team members were killed, while the fourth managed to escape. Lieutenant Michael P. Murphy was a native of Patchogue, New York. **(K 1076, Eddington)**

C. Wounded Warriors Project

Wounded Warriors Project (WWP) seeks to assist those men and women of our armed forces who have been severely wounded during the conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other locations around the world. The mission of WWP is to raise awareness and enlist the public's aid to meet the needs of severely injured servicemen and women, to help the severely injured members aid and assist each other, and to provide unique, direct programs and services to meet their needs.

On May 30, 2007 Sergeant Jeremy W. Feldbusch, U.S. Army (Retired), his parents, and local coordinator of the WWP were introduced to members of the New York State Assembly.

Sergeant Feldbusch's unit was sent to the Haditha Dam on the Euphrates River. While securing the outside of the dam, an artillery shell exploded about 30 meters away. Although his unit had good cover, a piece of shrapnel flew into Jeremy's right eye, damaging the optic nerve behind his left eye and finally lodging in the front lobe of his brain. Jeremy spent six weeks in a medically-induced coma as doctors worked to remove the shrapnel and insert a titanium mesh plate to help repair the damage to his cavity and hold his brain in place. When he woke up, he was completely blind and has some lingering damage to his brain. He spent two months at the Brooke Army Medical Center before returning home with his parents to continue his rehabilitation.

Jeremy and his mother have teamed up to help raise awareness for the needs of injured veterans. Jeremy became the first national spokesman for the WWP. He is planning to finish Braille training and earn a Ph.D. in psychology to work as a counselor in a veterans' hospital or have a private practice.

Sergeant Jeremy W. Feldbusch received a standing ovation.

D. CARES

The Department of Veterans' Affairs Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) program is the VA's effort to produce a national plan for modernizing health care facilities.

Several New York State VA hospitals have been evaluated by the CARES process.

VA Hudson Valley Healthcare System

The Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs announced on October 18, 2007, that Montrose and Castle Point areas will obtain new world-class facilities, according to the strategic plan selected by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The decision was to maintain the residential treatment program and build a multi-specialty state-of-art ambulatory care facility at the Montrose campus and modernize of the Castle Point campus. The Department will use VA's Enhanced Use Leasing (EUL) program to seek potential reuses for unused and vacated land and buildings on both campuses, such as senior housing, that will provide benefits to veterans. Under the EUL program, the VA retains ownership of the land and can determine and control its reuse.

Canandaigua Medical Center

On August 16, 2007, the VA announced that they will develop modernization plans for the Canandaigua campus that includes construction of a new single-floor 120-bed nursing home, a new 50 bed residential rehabilitation facility, and a renovated outpatient building to meet the current and anticipated needs of the Finger Lakes area veterans. The new facilities will be designed to preserve the historic core of the campus by renovating buildings in one of the historic courtyards to retain the ambiance of the 171-acre campus. The VA will also explore partnerships with the private sector to generate revenue and provide complementary services for veterans by leasing under-used buildings and land at Canandaigua.

The Department of Veterans Affairs announced in August 2007 that Canandaigua is being designated as a "VA Mental Health Center of Excellence," working in collaboration with the department of psychiatry at the University of Rochester. The facility will oversee a broad range of efforts—locally, regionally, and nationally—to improve mental health care for veterans. As a Center of Excellence, the facility will focus on suicide prevention, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other mental health issues

St. Albans

The VA plans to replace existing facilities on site with a new nursing home, outpatient clinic, and domiciliary facility consolidated on the north end of the campus, and to maintain access to the campus via Linden Boulevard. The construction of the new VA nursing home must be sensitive to the surrounding community's concerns, especially regarding the height of the buildings and the consideration for keeping the current auditorium and chapel.

Manhattan and Brooklyn

The VA is committed to retain the existing medical centers in both Manhattan and Brooklyn. Underlying the decision was the VA's determination to maintain access to care for veterans, as well as close ties to the medical schools of both New York University and the State of New York.

E. Mental Health Hotline

The VA has also opened its National Suicide Prevention Hot Line at Canandaigua Veteran Affairs Medical Center. It provides around-the-clock national assistance for veterans. The hotline is staffed by mental health professionals at Canandaigua. The number is 1-800-273-TALK (8255). Veterans in need of assistance are connected with on-call professionals, and then referred to follow-up treatment at their local VA facility.

F. Public Hearings/Roundtables

The current United States military efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan are the most sustained ground combat operations since the Vietnam era. Several recent reports suggest that servicemen and women returning from these operations are experiencing high rates of traumatic brain injury (TBI), post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other mental health problems. Although the Federal Department of Veterans Affairs provides care and treatment to servicemen and women, government officials, various community-based mental health and veterans organizations, as well as the media have suggested that the mental health needs of returning veterans are not being adequately met.

Left untreated, individuals with mental health conditions may experience other devastating ramifications, including unemployment, substance abuse, homelessness, or involvement with the criminal justice system. In order to gather information about these issues and other related issues, the Assembly's committees on Veterans' Affairs, and Mental Health, held a joint hearing on May 23, 2007, to evaluate New York's role and response in addressing the mental health needs of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. The committees heard over 15 witnesses representing a wide spectrum of perspectives, including veterans, research scientists, behavioral healthcare providers, and military personnel.

XII. OUTLOOK FOR 2008

The Assembly Standing Committee on Veterans' Affairs is looking forward to a productive year in 2008. The Committee will continue to work with the Division of Veterans' Affairs, Division of Military and Naval Affairs, other State agencies, veterans' organizations, and individual veterans throughout New York State to develop programs and services to assist the veterans of this state.

The issues the Committee will pursue include:

- ❖ recently returning veterans from areas of combat;
- ❖ disabled veterans;
- ❖ education benefits for veterans;
- ❖ outreach to women veterans;
- ❖ outreach to older veterans;
- ❖ long-term health care needs for veterans;
- ❖ Hepatitis C education program for Vietnam Veterans;
- ❖ homelessness among veterans; and
- ❖ services for veterans who suffer from alcohol and substance abuse and post-traumatic stress disorder.

The Committee will continue to strive to uphold its responsibilities by addressing the needs of New York State's approximately 1.1 million veterans and their families.

APPENDIX A

**2007 Summary of Action on All Bills Referred to
The Assembly Committee on Veterans' Affairs**

Final Action	Assembly Bills	Senate Bills	Total Bills
<u>Bills Reported With or Without Amendments</u>			
To Floor; Not Returning to Committee	1	0	1
To Floor; Recommitted and Died	0	0	0
To Ways & Means Committee	13	0	13
To Codes	3	0	3
To Rules Committee	1	0	1
To Judiciary	0	0	0
Total	18	0	18
<u>Bills Having Committee Reference Changed</u>			
Total	1	0	1
<u>Senate Bills Substituted or Recalled</u>			
Substituted	0	2	2
Recalled	0	1	1
Total	0	3	3
Bills Defeated in Committee	0	0	0
Bills Never Reported, Held in Committee	0	0	0
Bills Never Reported, Died in Committee	53	7	60
Bills Having Enacted Clauses Stricken	2	0	2
Motions to Discharge Lost	0	0	0
TOTAL Bills in Committee	74	10	84
TOTAL Number of Committee Meetings Held	4		

APPENDIX B

List of Bills That Passed Both Houses

Bill #	Sponsor	Description	Chapter
A.583-A	Paulin	Allows municipalities to grant a real property tax exemption to Cold War veterans.	655
A.6575	Towns	Creates an annuity of \$500 upon application to the state director of the division of veterans' affairs for a parent who, pursuant to 10 USC 1126, is a gold star parent and has an income at or below two hundred percent of the federal poverty level.	399
A.6948	Brodsky	Authorizes the New York State Division of Veteran Affairs to institute a fund to provide grants to family members of honorably discharged veterans to offset the cost of burial and interment expenses.	652
A.7171	Molinaro	Authorizes an application for an exemption pursuant to sect 452 of the Real Property Tax Law for the 2005 assessment roll for a specified parcel of real property owned by the Hudson Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1314 to be accepted.	647
A.7530	Ortiz	Amends the public health law in relation to the eligibility of veterans and qualified dependents of veterans for admission to New York State veterans' homes.	129
A.7857-A	Cusick	Authorizes payment of a war bonus of \$250 to members of the Merchant Marines who served at sea during World War II or to their next of kin.	325

APPENDIX C

Bills That Passed Both Houses but Were Vetoed

Bill #	Sponsor	Description	Veto
A.5154	Ortiz	This bill would create the veteran's geriatric mental health act. It would require the Director of the Division of Veterans' Affairs to develop, jointly with the Commissioner of the Office of Mental Health and the Director of the State Office of Aging, a Veteran's Geriatric Mental Health Demonstration Program. The legislation also would create an interagency geriatric veterans mental health planning council.	13
A.1739	Tonko	This bill would allow a qualified veteran to apply for the veterans' real property tax exemption within 30 days of the purchase of property when purchased after the taxable status date or after the levy of taxes.	90
A.6574	Towns	The purpose of this bill is to establish within the Division of Veterans' Affairs a Speakers Education Program.	82

APPENDIX D

Bills That Passed the Assembly Only

Bill #	Sponsor	Description
A.4696	Schroeder	This bill would exempt from real property taxation, real property owned by a person certified to receive a Department of Veterans Affairs disability pension, pursuant to 38 U.S.C., Section 1521, and allow an award letter from the Department of Veterans Affairs to be submitted as proof of the disability.
A.5156-A	Ortiz	This bill would authorize the issuance of a Cold War service medal to those veterans who served in the United States armed forces from September 2, 1945, to December 26, 1991.