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Initiatives To Help Our Hometown Heroes

by Senator Ranzenhofer
November, 2014

New York's heroic servicemen and women deserve our respect, our gratitude, and as much support as we can possibly provide. We should always be mindful of their sacrifice and service on behalf of all Americans. As your State Senator, I have always worked to support New York's courageous veterans.

Earlier this year, I honored a hometown hero at a State Capitol ceremony as one of the newest inductees of the Veterans' Hall of Fame. While he enlisted in the United States Army decades ago, James Neider continues to serve veterans and their families to this day. He is a founder of the Joint Veterans' Honor Guard and a tireless advocate for locating a National Military Cemetery to our region.

During this year's legislative session, I worked with my colleagues to enact new legislation to help advance educational and professional opportunities for veterans, as well as active service members and their families. The legislation seeks to help:

- Ease the transition to a new school for children of military families that relocate as a result of change of duty station;
- Lower the cost of higher education for veterans receiving benefits under the GI bills;
- Offer military family members greater flexibility with professional licenses received from other states; and
- Strengthen the supplemental burial assistance provided by the state to military families when a service member dies in combat

or as a result of injuries sustained in battle.

This legislation will build upon the new law, also enacted earlier this year, to help Service Disabled Veterans pursue successful new business ventures. Modeled after a successful Federal initiative, the law created a new contract preference for service disabled veterans, opening the door to major new business opportunities. More importantly, this new initiative will help to send a loud and clear message that when New York's service men and women return home, they will be welcomed with the promise of economic opportunity.

Last but not least, this year's budget supported veterans in many ways. The final fiscal plan allocated \$3.1 million for Veterans Assistance Programs. It also expanded eligibility for the Gold Star Parent Annuity, to remove the income requirement to receive this \$500 annual state provided payment, and included a new measure for veteran businesses to be accommodated within the Department of Economic Development's Entrepreneurial Assistance Program.

Our veterans have sacrificed so much to serve our nation. We must always remember our freedoms have been fought for and defended by current and former members of the Armed Forces, many of whom made the ultimate sacrifice. While we owe them a debt of gratitude that can never truly be repaid, each one of these initiatives will help to show our appreciation for their service.

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