

Helping Military Families

We have all seen the touching videos of military men and women receiving a joyful airport welcome on their return home or watching as a returning service member drops by for an unannounced visit at their child's school. Military families stand beside their loved ones through thick and thin and shoulder the burdens of stressful deployments, countless moves, and the reintegration process.

For a long time, individual states struggled with how best they might help military families. A collaboration between the Department of Defense, the National Center for Interstate Compacts, and the Council of State Governments, of which I am a member, resulted in a document that laid the groundwork for addressing some of the challenges in education and employment faced by military families.



That document, the Interstate Compact of Education Opportunities for Military Children, along with other in-state initiatives resulted in state legislation here in New York that is intended to assist today's military families. This legislation was unanimously passed by both houses of the Legislature and now awaits the Governor's signature.

Military families often face numerous obstacles when they seek to enroll their children in school after being transferred to a duty station in New York State. The same is true for guardians who care for minor children when both parents are deployed. When this measure is signed into law, New York will join 48 other states by establishing a uniform protocol making it easier to enroll military children in school; to transfer school, immunization and course credit records from other school districts and other states; to facilitate eligibility requirements for educational, athletic and social programs; and to allow students to graduate with diplomas from their former school district.

Working military spouses and partners are forced to leave their civilian jobs when a duty station transfer takes place. Finding new employment can be daunting for many professionals since licensing requirements differ from state to state. With this legislation, changes will be made to state law to allow a military spouse, partner or other household member to practice as a real estate broker or salesperson providing he or she had been licensed in another state before relocating to New York. License reciprocity will also be recognized for individuals holding licenses in barbering, esthetics, cosmetology, natural hair styling and nail specialties.

VISITOR FROM WEST POINT

First Captain Lindsey Danilack, the fourth female in the history of the Academy to serve as Brigade Commander, the United States Military Academy at West Point's highest cadet corps rank, discussed her military aspirations with Assemblyman Schimminger in the Assembly Chamber during this year's annual West Point Day at the State Capitol.

Lifetime Liberty Pass

Veterans with service-connected disabilities are eligible to apply for the state's new Lifetime Liberty Pass. The Lifetime Liberty Pass provides for the discounted use of parks, historic sites, and recreational facilities operated by the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (State Parks) and the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for qualified disabled veterans.

To qualify for the pass, a veteran must be a resident of New York State and provide State Parks with written certification from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or the NYS Division of Veterans Affairs that the applicant is a war veteran with a 40 percent or greater service connected disability as certified by the VA, or who has at any time been awarded an allowance by the federal government towards the purchase of an automobile or is eligible for such an award.

Benefits include free vehicle entry to State Parks and DEC-operated day-use areas, as well as numerous state boat launch sites, historic sites, arboretums and park

preserves; free golf at 28 State Park golf courses; free swimming pool entrance at 36 State Park pools; and discounted camping and cabin rentals at all 119 State Parks and DEC campgrounds. For a Lifetime Liberty Pass application, please contact my office at 873-2540 or schimmingerr@assembly.state.ny.us.

Disabled veterans are also eligible for the lifetime National Parks and Federal Recreation Lands Pass. This free pass can be used at recreational areas managed by the National Parks Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Bureau of Reclamation. Benefits can vary by federal agency but can include free or discounted entrance and/or service fees. To apply for the pass, disabled veterans should secure proof of permanent disability such as a rating decision letter, a VA Healthcare Card noting service connected status, or some other means. Application must be made in person at any participating federal recreation site or office or by calling 1-888-275-8747.

Remembering the Heroes of the Korean War

Bands and parades welcomed home the warriors of World War II, but such fanfares were noticeably missing when veterans returned from Korea, the “forgotten war.” Although Korean veterans were never ostracized or berated as Vietnam veterans sometimes were, they nevertheless have felt as “forgotten” as the war in which they courageously served.

More than six decades ago, New York’s sons and daughters were called upon to defend freedom in Korea, a country far away. They fought in a brutal war on an unforgiving terrain in weather that ranged from 100 plus degrees in the summer to more than 50 degrees below zero in winter, and in situations where they were often outnumbered and outgunned.

We should always recognize and remember the gallantry of those who served in Korea and listen to and learn from their heroic stories of service and sacrifice. We should pause and remember those who are still missing in action and those individuals from our community who lost their lives at Bloody Ridge, the Punchbowl, Taejon, Paju, Chorwon and other places. The Korean War Project lists CPL Robert A. Bowen, SFC Wood-

row L. Diebold, PVT Kenneth H. Glawf, MSG George H. Kinney, PFC Robert S. Kirschner, PFC Kenneth E. McMeekin, CPL Stanley Nowak, Jr., SSGT Maurice A. Padwa, PVT Otto L. Roneker, Jr., PFC Ronald B. Schamberger, PFC William E. Storck and CPL Donald K. Wood as among the fallen heroes from the Tonawandas and Kenmore.

On July 3rd of this year, I had the honor of joining with Town of Tonawanda officials in honoring Korean War veterans at a ceremony at the Town’s Veterans Memorial in Walter M. Kenney Field. More than 200 Town of Tonawanda and Village of Kenmore residents were recognized for their courage, sacrifice and service during the Korean War. Their own stories of service and gallantry underscore why Korean War veterans must always be remembered and not forgotten.



REMINISCING ABOUT DAYS PAST

Assemblyman Schimminger visited with Patricia Babcock whose late husband, former Town of Tonawanda Highway Superintendent Paul F. Babcock, served in the Navy during the Korean War and was among those posthumously honored at the ceremony. Also pictured are Shirley and John Ceder. Mr. Ceder was recognized for his service in the Army.

NON SIBI SED PATRIAE (NOT SELF BUT COUNTRY)

The Gugino brothers, Ronald, left, and Robert, upon arriving at the ceremony stopped at the “blue jet,” as it is often called, which has been on loan to the town from the U.S. government since May 1959. Today, the Town of Tonawanda Veterans Memorial sits directly behind the F9F-6P airframe. The Guginos, both former members of the Navy, recalled their wartime service with Assemblyman Schimminger and former fellow Seaman Paul Wartko.



DEDICATING THE BLUE STAR MEMORIAL

During the July 3rd event, a Blue Star Memorial marker, which was donated by the Kenmore Garden Club, was dedicated and positioned on the walkway leading up to the Veterans Memorial at Kenney Field. This is the seventh Blue Star Memorial marker in Western New York, and is part of a program that began in the 1940s to honor World War II veterans, but over time was expanded to include all men and women who had served, were serving or would serve in the armed services of the United States. Mary Ann Jumper, director of the Eighth District Federated Garden Clubs of NYS, unveils the marker with Town of Tonawanda Supervisor Anthony Caruana, Council Member Daniel Crangle and Assemblyman Schimminger.



New Laws and Legislation • Continued from page 1

a community college, the State University of New York or the City University of New York under the federal GI bills; a supplemental burial allowance for families when a service member was wounded in combat but died from their wounds outside of the combat zone; an expanded Veterans Health Care Information Program that would collect data on specific mental and physical health issues, including post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury; and an income tax check-off for the Homeless Veterans Assistance Fund.

Twin Cities Highway Rededication

Twin Cities residents are patriotic and they have always been proud of their sons and daughters whose service to our country has spanned generations. Our local heroes, the fallen and all who served, are perpetually honored through the memorials that have been erected to mark their service, sacrifice and place in history. Memorials remember those who served in the Civil War, World War I, World War II and Korea and special monuments have been constructed to recognize the Seabees and Marines. In addition, River Road in the City of North Tonawanda has been dedicated as the North Tonawanda POW-MIA Memorial Highway and the Niagara Thruway (I-190) from the Town of Tonawanda to Fort Niagara has been dedicated as the 299th Engineer Combat Battalion Memorial Highway.

Therefore, it is no surprise that 44 years ago our local officials took steps to honor the local servicemen who had died in Vietnam. Back in the early-1970s, as the war still raged in the jungles of Vietnam and war protesters marched in the streets, the Twin Cities sought legislative approval to name the Young and Division Street Arterial (Rte. 425), in their honor. The mayors of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda appointed a joint highway naming committee and, according to Tonawanda News reports, its members chose to “designate the highway in memory of all Twin Cities Vietnamese war dead.” The committee’s suggested name was the Twin Cities Memorial Highway with the caveat that plaques listing the names of the war dead be placed on the arterial’s bridge crossing Tonawanda Creek and the Barge Canal.

Legislation naming the highway was introduced and passed by the late Senator Earl Brydges and the highway was opened and dedicated on October 6, 1970. On Memorial Day 1971, five-foot-high memorial monuments, designed and paid for by the municipalities, were dedicated on each side of the canal along East Niagara Street and Sweeney Street below the arterial bridge.

Over the years, it became obvious that these memorials were too isolated and did not properly pay homage to the fallen as was originally envisioned. North Tonawanda relocated its Vietnam memorial to Brauer Park near the city’s World War I and II memorials. Later, the City of Tonawanda relocated its memorial to a spot along the Niagara River near City Hall and close to other veteran memorials in that municipality.

Today, the monuments honoring those Twin Cities residents who died in Vietnam stand far removed and unrelated to the highway that was also dedicated to their memory. There is simply no longer any indication as to what the “memorial” in the highway’s name signifies.

Now, during the national commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War, the time is right to change that and rededicate the highway and fully honor the generation of heroes who served in Vietnam. Toward that end, I have authored legislation that would rededicate the Twin Cities Memorial Highway as the Twin Cities Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway. This legislation was passed by both houses was signed into law by Governor Cuomo on July 3rd (Chapter 84 of the Laws of 2014).



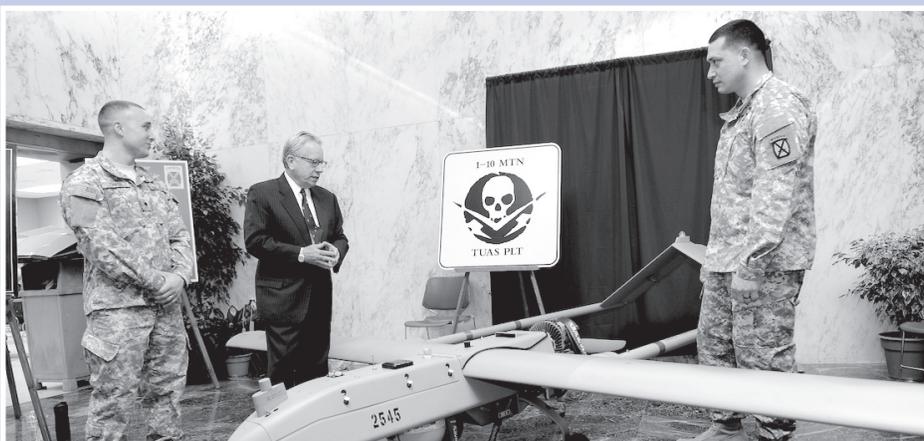
Veterans Update

from

Assemblyman

**Robin
Schimminger**

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LEARNING ABOUT NEW TECHNOLOGY

Two soldiers from Fort Drum explain to Assemblyman Schimminger some of the capabilities of military drones used by the U.S. armed forces in combat situations. Located in Northern New York, Fort Drum is the home of the U.S. Army’s 10th Mountain Division, which has experienced numerous deployments to the Middle East.