

Now there is an app for that

Smartphone technology enables users to make phone calls, get GPS directions, take pictures, play music, track appointments and research information. With an app for just about everything, it was time to add this new technology to the State Division of Veterans Affairs tool kit. As a result two legislative initiatives that I supported, have been enacted that will enable veterans to use their phones, tablets and, of course, their computers to better access information on services, programs, health care, employment opportunities, education and other topics.

Currently, the Division of Veterans Affairs is in the process of updating its website with a fact sheet that lists contact information for all of the state's veteran integrated service networks as well as con-

tact information for the federal VA medical centers, clinics and administrative offices. This change came about after the passage of A.7967-B/S.3137-C by both houses of the Legislature in May of this year. On June 8th the Governor signed this measure into law as Chapter 64 of the Laws of 2016.

In June, another legislative proposal, A.10258/S.7894, was passed by both the Assembly and the Senate that directed the state Division of Veterans Affairs to establish, operate and maintain a free mobile application that will provide veterans and their family members with a new platform to access veterans' benefit information. This measure will soon be transmitted to the Governor who is expected to sign it into law.

THOSE WHO SERVED



Assemblyman Robin Schimminger visits Crestmount Senior Apartments in the Town of Tonawanda, where he honors 22 veterans with certificates and mementos in a ceremony earlier this year. The veterans served in World War II, Korea and Vietnam. Afterward, resident and World War II veteran George Trautman, far left, celebrated his 91st birthday with cake and singing.

Licensing Procedures Streamlined

Moving across state lines brings employment challenges to military spouses who hold state specific licenses or certification. While many states have enacted legislation to honor the professional licensure of military spouses, New York State has had the dubious distinction of being the only state in the nation that had failed to do so. That is now about to change.

On May 23rd and June 2nd legislation was unanimously passed by the Assembly and Senate, respectively, that would allow the State Education Department to modify and expedite its licensing

requirements to permit a military spouse who is transferred to New York and holds a valid out-of-state license for a profession in which he or she is fully qualified to transfer that license to New York State. In addition, this measure provides for a 50 percent reduction of the initial license fee.

This legislation, A.4394-A/S.2947, that I supported, will soon be transmitted to the Governor for his expected approval. It will go into effect 180 days after it is signed into law.

Remembering the Fallen from World War I

Our community, like so many across our nation, felt the pain and loss of its citizens during the Great War. During the World War I centenary, it is right that we take a moment to remember the men from our community who made the ultimate sacrifice. Using historical documents and war records, the New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center has compiled a Roll of Honor: Citizens of the State of New York Who Died in the Service of the United States during World War I. The following individuals were identified as being from this Assembly District:

John B. Ammerman
Herbert Brider
Peter D. Dahl
Elmer W. Dane
Frederick Busch Eberhardt
Nick Evans
Chester Fitzgerald
Harvey Gombert
Clarence J. Harder
Hiram J. Harkins
Arthur C. Hartman
Sanger Allen Hathaway
Ernest Hauser
Louis J. Herman
Harry Claxton Johnson
Elmer W. Kaufman

Lambert J. Keller
Robert L. Koch
John W. Kohler
Otto H. Libeck
Raymond Winston Limbert
Frederick W. Lubs
George W. Martin
Russell I. Martin
William H. McAllistrer
William R. McMahou
John D. Mundie
Martin F. Nolan
John F. Ott
George L. Rathgeber
George Roeder
James M. Rogers

John E. Roth
Walter E. Runge
Charles F. Scott
Walter Sharts
Sylvester Shaw
Frank S. Sommers
Edward D. Strough
Charles D. Struebing
Ernest J. Velia
Norman A. Waterstrat
Samuel G. Welch
Ernest Wendt
Wojciech Wojtyta
Frank Zerlinski



MEETING VETERANS

Assemblyman Schimminger stands with Town of Tonawanda resident Andrew P. Biondo II, who served in Iraq. He was among the 39 residents of the Town of Tonawanda and Village of Kenmore honored for their service during the Iraq, Afghanistan and Gulf Wars during a ceremony at Kenney Field. Also pictured is Biondo's wife, Kathleen.

Sales Tax on Memorial Poppy Flowers Eliminated

Veterans distributing red crepe paper poppy flowers around Memorial Day and Veterans Day are a familiar sight in communities across the state and nation. Inspired by the poem "In Flanders Fields," the poppy has become a constant symbol of death, life and remembrance since the end of World War I.

Today millions of crepe paper poppies are handmade and assembled by veterans participating in therapeutic rehabilitation in programs at VA medical facilities and veteran nursing homes. The flowers are distributed across the country in exchange for donations that go directly to assist disabled and hospitalized veterans. A truly patriotic endeavor, the poppy program not only respects veterans and honors America's fallen heroes, but also educates the public on a part of our military history.

Needless to say, I and my legislative colleagues were shocked when we learned that veterans who make the poppies could be subject to state sales tax. Given the nature of the program, legislation was introduced in both houses of the Legislature that would exempt veterans who produce memorial poppy flowers from state sales tax. This measure, A.8480/S.4986 was passed unanimously by both the Assembly and Senate and will now be transmitted to the Governor for his consideration.

Western New York National Veterans Cemetery Update

While the establishment of a national veterans' cemetery in Western New York has been a lengthy process, several important developments have recently occurred.

On May 24th the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemetery Administration (NCA) announced that the name for the soon to be established 132-acre cemetery in Pembroke, New York would be the Western New York National Cemetery. This announcement was preceded by the release of preliminary drawings that depict a site featuring a walled front entrance, memorial walkway, committal shelters, a columbarium, and a flagpole assembly area. In addition, there will be an administration and maintenance

building as well as a public information center with an electronic graveside locator and public restrooms.

Plans call for the cemetery to be built in five phases with construction to begin in 2017. The initial construction phase of approximately 70 acres will provide approximately 10 years of interment capacity resulting in 10 years of burials. The first burials are expected to begin within 12 to 18 months after the start of construction. The complete build-out of the cemetery will take about 33 months, and it will be built to accommodate future burials for the next 70 years.

The Western New York National Cemetery will be the seventh national veterans' cemetery in New York State.



MAKING INTRODUCTIONS

The assemblyman introduces honoree Derek M. Sansone, left, to event attendee George Trautman after a recent ceremony honoring 39 veterans of the Iraq, Afghanistan and Gulf Wars at Kenney Field in the Town of Tonawanda. Both Sansone and Trautman are members of the United States Naval Construction Forces, also known as "Seabees". The word "Seabee" comes from the initials "CB," which in turn comes from the term "Construction Battalion." Trautman served in World War II and Sansone in a more recent war.



Veterans Update

from

Assemblyman

Robin Schimminger

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