



Dear Friends,

First of all, thank you so much to everyone who participated in my joint budget forum last night with NYS Senator Shelley Mayer. If you were not able to attend, but would like to watch it, please head over to my [Facebook page](#), where it is posted. As always, please feel free to reach out with any questions.

Among the Assembly committees on which I have the honor to serve is the [Committee on Veterans' Affairs](#). I am pleased to have the opportunity to lend my voice to the discussion on how we can best provide access to services for veterans in my district and across the state. I also wish to support those actively serving in the military and their families. New York is home to 26,777 active-duty service members, 10,145 active-duty spouses, 16,494 active-duty children, 40,851 National Guard and reserve members, 16,695 National Guard and reserve spouses and 22,650 National Guard and reserve children.

**April is [Month of the Military Child](#).** It therefore seems fitting that this newsletter focuses on a new bill that I have introduced in the Assembly, which would create a **Purple Star School Program** in New York State, as well as highlight recently passed legislation that will benefit our state's veterans.

### **[Purple Star School Program](#)**

Military-connected children (children of service members on active duty, and in the National Guard and reserves), often move [every 2-3 years](#), which can be a real challenge for students on a social, academic and emotional level. In fact, according to the [Defense-State Liaison Office](#), **the average military-connected child will experience six to nine different schools during their K-12 education experience.**

With each move, military service members and their families face many challenges as they settle into new communities and schools. Students in particular face many hurdles, including gaps and overlaps in curriculum, course disruption and differing graduation requirements. Additionally, they face the loss of social networks and activities, which they then need to establish in their new schools. In order to help ease the transition for these students (and their parents), the Department of Defense recommends states create the **Purple Star School Program**.



Purple Star Schools are military-friendly schools that have demonstrated a major commitment to students and families connected to our nation's military. These schools have met specific state-designed requirements to support the unique situations facing military students and their families. The

program allows schools to make assessments so that critical information is easily accessible to military-connected students, military families and schools.

**Thirteen states have created statewide Purple Star School Programs and the legislation I have introduced would authorize the NYS Commissioner of Education to do the same.** The clarity and precision derived from New York communicating clear expectations and responsibilities at the state level ensures standardization, creating consistency as the program scales and families move between Purple Star Schools, even to and from other states.

If this bill is enacted into law, a school or school district may, but is not required, to apply to the Commissioner of Education for designation as a Purple Star School upon demonstration that the school has: (1) appointed a military liaison, (2) created a website of resources for military-connected students, (3) maintained a transition program for military-connected students, (4) offered staff professional development on military-connected student issues, (5) monitored the academic progress of military-connected students, and (6) either (a) passed a resolution in support of military-connected students, (b) hosted an event in support of military-connected students or (c) offered volunteer opportunities at the campus for military members.

As I mentioned earlier, New York is home to 16,494 active-duty children and 22,650 National Guard and reserve children. **This legislation would help make the transition to and from schools in New York just that much easier, and give their parents – who already sacrifice so much on behalf of our country – some much-deserved peace of mind.**

I am pleased to be working with Christopher Arnold, Northeast Regional Liaison to the Department of Defense, Military Community and Family Policy. He is also a veteran and resident of the 93rd Assembly District. In fact, it was his outreach regarding the Purple Star School Program – which I very much appreciate – that led to my introduction of this legislation.

For more information on the Purple School Star Program please visit the websites of the [Defense-State Liaison Office](#) and [Military Child Education Coalition](#). Please also feel free to reach out to me directly with any questions.

---

### **[Programs and Support for Veterans in the 2021-2022 NYS budget](#)**

In the course of hearings on the Governor's proposed budget, it became apparent that proposed funding levels for programs serving veterans were inadequate. As I mentioned in last week's newsletter, in early January the world looked quite different than now. The pandemic-induced recession was showing little sign of easing and we had no idea that there would be substantial pandemic relief under the American Rescue Plan. Fortunately, as economic projections improved and the funds from the federal government were allocated, the legislature began the process of restoring proposed cuts in funding and bolstering existing programs.

In speaking with the [Legal Services of the Hudson Valley](#) (LSHV), I learned not only of their concerns over funding cuts, but also that they provide comprehensive civil legal services to veterans and military families; however, that particular program was only available in Rockland, Orange, Sullivan and Ulster counties. The CEO of LSHV advised me that an appropriation of \$60,000 from the state, when combined with available federal funds, would allow the program to be expanded into Dutchess, Putnam and Westchester counties. I

advocated for the funding and was so pleased it made it into the final budget. My thanks to Speaker Heastie and Veterans' Affairs Committee Chair Didi Barrett for supporting this request. **And many thanks to LSHV CEO Rachel Halperin and LSHV staff and volunteers for all their hard work on behalf of Hudson Valley residents.**



I am pleased that the 2021-2022 budget also provides robust funding for veterans' programs with an appropriation of \$23.75 million to the Division of Veterans' Affairs, an increase of \$4.2 million over the Governor's January budget proposal.

---

### Veterans Treatment Courts Expanded

Although we discussed this a few weeks ago, this seemed an appropriate opportunity to once again mention the [law recently signed](#) expanding access to [Veterans Treatment Courts \(VTCs\)](#), in case anyone knows a Veteran who could benefit from this legal option.

Although New York has 35 VTCs, not every Veteran had access to these courts. This legislation expressly authorizes the state's chief administrative judge to designate more of these courts throughout the state. Additionally, in counties where no VTC exists, the legislation gives judges the ability to remove appropriate criminal court cases against veterans to VTCs in adjoining counties, provided that both the sending and receiving counties' District Attorneys agree. The bill would prohibit transfer to a VTC in cases where the offense charged is a family offense, as defined in the Criminal Procedure Law, involving members of the same family or household.

With specially-trained judges and appropriate referral resources, VTCs help veterans and their families get treatment and services that can help prevent future problems.

---

### ALL Veterans Eligible for COVID-19 Vaccinations at the VA

Finally, for anyone reading this newsletter who is or knows a veteran who has not yet been vaccinated, **please be aware that ALL veterans (as well as spouses and caregivers of a veterans) are now eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine through the VA**, with walk-in clinics available locally. **Please note that VA Health System eligibility is no longer required.**

**WALK-IN COVID-19 VACCINE CLINICS**

**MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY** 8:30 AM to 2:30 PM

- **OPEN TO ALL VETERANS**
- **VETERAN SPOUSES**
- **CAREGIVERS**
- **CHAMP VA RECIPIENTS**

**NO APPOINTMENT NECESSARY**

**LOCATIONS**

**CASTLE POINT CAMPUS**  
41 CASTLE POINT ROAD,  
WAPPINGERS FALLS, NY 12590  
MULTIPURPOSE ROOM

**FDR MONTROSE CAMPUS**  
2094 ALBANY POST ROAD  
MONTROSE, NY 10548  
BUILDING 15, ROOM 16

\*PLEASE CALL US IF YOU'D PREFER TO SCHEDULE A VACCINATION AT ONE OF OUR COMMUNITY CLINICS

**IF YOU'D LIKE TO APPLY FOR VA HEALTH CARE, PLEASE CALL US AT 845-831-2000 EXT. 215100 OR 203309.**

\*\*\*\*\*

As always, if there are any issues that you would like to see covered in a future newsletter, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at [burdickc@nyassembly.gov](mailto:burdickc@nyassembly.gov) (or simply reply to this email). **Please also follow me on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) for the most up-to-date information.**

Miss any of our previous newsletters? You can [find them here](#).

Sincerely yours,



**DISTRICT OFFICE**  
100 South Bedford Road  
Suite 150  
Mount Kisco, NY 10549  
914-244-4450

**ALBANY OFFICE**  
LOB 326  
Albany, NY 12248  
518-455-5397

Assembly District 93 | [burdickc@nyassembly.gov](mailto:burdickc@nyassembly.gov)