



MAIL CALL

CHAIRMAN STEVE STERN

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Issue 005

15 July 2026/Vol. 002

A Message From Our Chairman

It has been my privilege to work closely with and for the brave men and women who have sacrificed so much to protect our great nation. I look forward to meeting with our veterans from across New York State, and as Chairman I remain committed to ensuring that our veterans in New York State always receive the recognition, support, and services that they deserve.



Contact Chairman Stern

**95 Broad Hollow Road, Suite 100,
Melville, NY 11747
631-271-8025
sterns@nyassembly.gov**

**Legislative Office Bldg. Room 841
Albany, NY 12248
518-455-5732**

**[https://nyassembly.gov/comm/?
id=40](https://nyassembly.gov/comm/?id=40)**



Assemblyman Stern was proud to join with our Veterans and their families this Memorial Day at Calverton National Cemetery to honor our local heroes who made the ultimate sacrifice protecting our great nation.

Important Information from Chairman Stern

NYS Department of Veterans’ Services	518-474-6114
Veterans Crisis Hotline	988, Press 1
VA Health Benefits Hotline	877-222-VETS
PACT Act Assistance	800-698-2411
VA Healthcare-Related Fraud, VHA Office of Integrity and Compliance Helpline	1-866-842-4357
VA Benefits Fraud Helpline	1-800-827-1000
Support for VGLI Program, SGLI Program, and FSGLI Claims	800-419-1473
Support for VA-Life, S-DVI, and VMLI	800-669-8477
Assistance with Education Benefits	888-442-4551
Caregiver Support Line	1-855-260-3274
VA Loan Guaranty Service	877-827-3702
Special Issue Hotline – Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act, Gulf War, Agent Orange, and other information	800-749-8387
National Call Center for Homeless Veterans	877-424-3838
MISSION Act	800-698-2411
Spina Bifida Health Care Benefits Program	833-930-0816
Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs, CHAMPVA	800-733-8387
Women Veterans Helpline	855-829-6636
Debt Management Center	800-827-0648
Health Resource Center (collection of medical and prescription debts)	866-400-1238
Paralyzed Veterans of America	212-807-3114
Veteran Text Crisis Line	text 838255
Connect with a fellow combat Veteran about your experiences, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:	1-877-927-8387; TTY:711
NYS Veterans App and Other Helpful NYS Mobile Apps:	
https://www.ny.gov/mobileapps	

Important Information from Chairman Stern

VA Health Chat: This app allows veterans to chat with VA staff when they have a question about a non-life-threatening health issue, want to schedule a VA appointment or refill a VA prescription, and more: <https://mobile.va.gov/app/va-health-chat>

VA Health and Benefits: Download the VA Health and Benefits mobile app to manage VA health care, benefits and payments from a mobile phone or tablet: <https://mobile.va.gov/app/va-health-and-benefits>

VA Video Connect: An app to help Veterans and their caregivers quickly and easily meet with VA health care providers through live video on any computer or mobile device with an internet connection: <https://mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect>

Schedule an online consultation with a NYS Veterans Services Agency Benefits Advisor: <https://veterans.ny.gov>

Find your local NYS Veterans Services Office: <https://veterans.ny.gov/office-locations>

Find your local NYS Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialists: <https://dol.ny.gov/services-veterans>

Property Tax Exemptions for Veterans: <https://veterans.ny.gov/property-tax-exemptions-veterans>

Health and Disability Benefits for Families and Caregivers: <https://www.va.gov/family-and-caregiver-benefits/health-and-disability/>

Apply for a Veterans Status Designation on a NYS Photo ID: <https://dmv.ny.gov/more-info/veteran-status-designation-on-a-photo-document>

Homes for Veterans Program: <https://veterans.ny.gov/homes-veterans-program>

Gold Star Annuity Program: <https://veterans.ny.gov/gold-star-parent-annuity-program>

New York State Blind Annuity Program: <https://veterans.ny.gov/new-york-state-blind-annuity-program>

Benefits for Certain Children of Vietnam War Veterans who served in areas where Agent Orange and other chemicals were used: <https://veterans.ny.gov/benefits-certain-children-vietnam-war-veterans>

New York State Veterans' Nursing Homes: <https://veterans.ny.gov/new-york-state-veterans-nursing-homes>

Find Your Local Vet Center: <https://www.va.gov/find-locations/>

Lifetime Liberty Pass: <https://veterans.ny.gov/lifetime-liberty-pass>

Non-Service-Connected Pension: <https://veterans.ny.gov/non-service-connected-pension>



Access Pass

The Access Pass allows qualified New York State residents with disabilities, as defined in the application, free or discounted use of state parks, historic sites, and recreational facilities operated by the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and the NY State Department of Environmental Conservation. The pass holder must be present when attempting to use it for free or discounted use of facilities.

Group Access Pass

To qualify for a Group Access Pass, all members of the group must be residents of New York State. The group's authorized representative must provide a certificate of operation from a qualifying NY State Agency, or have a physician submit a letter that all users, other than staff, qualify for an Access Pass in one or more of the categories listed on the application.

For more information regarding the Access Pass eligibility and how to apply, please visit: <https://parks.ny.gov/visit/passes/access-pass>



NYS Patriot Plan

The Patriot Plan Benefit allows residents of New York State, who are members of the New York State National Guard, Militia, or Reserves, to apply for one free Empire Pass during their active duty assignment. The Empire Pass issued through the Patriot Plan Benefit is for the service member's own use or is shareable with their family.

The Empire Pass holder may present or scan their Empire Pass at participating NYS Park sites to waive the Vehicle Use Fee.

For additional information on the Empire Pass, including where it is accepted, or Guidelines for Use, and how to order, please visit the Empire Pass website: <https://parks.ny.gov/visit/passes/patriot-plan>



Lifetime Liberty Pass

New York State residents who are Veterans or Gold Star Parents, Spouses, or Children are eligible to order the free Lifetime Liberty Pass, allowing discounted use of parks, historic sites, and recreation facilities operated by NY State Parks and DEC facilities. To see if you qualify, please visit the Lifetime Liberty Pass webpage, <https://shop.parks.ny.gov/store/liberty-pass/lifetime-liberty-pass>



Free/Reduced Fee Sporting License

Active-duty military members, resident military members of NYS Organized Militia or U.S. Reserve Forces, resident active military members of U.S. Armed Forces stationed outside New York who are home on leave for 30 days or less, non-resident military members stationed in New York, and military veterans with 40% or more service-related disability, are eligible for free/reduced fishing, hunting and trapping sporting licenses.

For more information and how to apply, please visit:

<https://dec.ny.gov/regulatory/permits-licenses/sporting-and-use/sporting/free-reduced-fee>

Joseph P. Dwyer

Peer Support Project

Founded in memory of Private First Class Joseph P. Dwyer, a combat medic in Iraq who struggled with PTSD, their mission is to advocate for safe, non-clinical environments where veterans can connect, share their experiences, and find healing through the support of their peers. This peer-driven approach helps veterans and their families navigate the challenges of civilian life, from mental health struggles to reintegration into their communities.



ASSOCIATION FOR
MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

To Advocate. To Educate. To Empower. Together.



Veterans & Service Member's Peer Support Groups

Online Support Groups

Thursdays 7pm-8pm

March 2026

- 03/05
- 03/19

May 2026

- 05/14
- 05/28

April 2026

- 04/02
- 04/16
- 04/30

June 2026

- 06/11
- 06/25

**For meeting link information*
please call the number down below*

Services offered through Dwyer:

- Individual and group support
- Volunteer opportunities
- Connection to services and benefits
- Provide a safe and healthy place to talk freely



Connect. Share. Heal.

Are you a Veteran or Service Member looking for a safe space to talk to others who understand? Join the Dwyer Project's Veteran Peer Support Groups:

- **Shared Experience:** Connect with fellow veterans who understand the challenges of military and civilian life.
- **Supportive Community:** Build friendships and find encouragement in a judgment free environment.
- **Practical Tools:** Learn coping strategies and share resources to support your well-being.

ELIGIBILITY:

Open to anyone who
served.



Registration is not
Require for more info
call: **631.853.8345**



Our Locations

- 939 Johnson Avenue, Ronkonkoma, NY 11779
- 1380 Roanoke Avenue, Riverhead, NY 11901
- H. Lee Denison Building 100 Veterans Memorial Hwy, Hauppauge, NY 11788



Visit Our Website

www.mhaw.org
www.dwyerproject.org

Restoring Funding for Boys and Girls State

Chairman Steve Stern is proud to deliver \$200,000 to the American Legion Department of New York (\$100,000 for Girls State and \$100,000 for Boys State) as part of the New York State Budget, through the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

American Legion posts across New York State send some of our most engaged and bright students to SUNY Brockport and SUNY Morrisville for a week of education and friendly competition. Split into the Federalist and Nationalist parties, students learn about service in the armed forces, run for elected office for their county and state, and build their civic knowledge.



Assemblyman Stern presenting a check of \$10,000 to Greenlawn American Legion Post 1244 to support Girls and Boys State.

"I am proud to restore funding to Girls State and Boys State, ensuring that students from across New York have the opportunity to participate in these historic programs," said Assemblyman Stern. "Engaging students in our civic processes is fundamental to preserving and protecting our American democracy. Each summer, the American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary instill in our young people the value of service to our community, state and entire nation."

Veterans Peer Support Project

**Third Monday of Each Month
12 PM–2 PM**

Half Hollow Hills Community Library

55 Vanderbilt Parkway, Dix Hills, NY 11746

hhhllibrary.org | 631-421-4530

Stop by and speak with a peer mentor to learn about free programs and services for Long Island Veterans of all eras. Light refreshments will be available. No registration required. Open to all.



Joseph P. Dwyer Project

LEGAL SERVICES

**Legal Services
of Long Island**

Long Island
State Veterans Home
AT STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY

**Long Island State
Veterans Home**



**Suffolk County Veterans
Services Agency**



**Long Island Cares
Inc. The Harry
Chapin Food Bank**



**United Veterans
Beacon House**





Veterans Project Food Collection Bin

Giving Back to Our Veterans

Returning soldiers and their families face unique challenges transitioning from the front lines to civilian life. Help veterans in Nassau and Suffolk Counties. All donations are greatly appreciated.

EXAMPLES OF OUR MOST NEEDED ITEMS

Listed below are examples of our most requested items, however we accept ALL non-perishable items. Together, we can help Long Islanders facing hunger.

BREAKFAST Cereals Oatmeal	BOXED/BAGGED GRAINS Pasta Rice (Brown/White)	CANNED FRUITS Low Sugar Items No Sugar Added
CANNED MEALS Soups Pasta Meals Stews	CANNED PROTEINS Chicken Fish (Tuna, Salmon, etc.) Beans	CANNED VEGETABLES Low Sodium Items No Salt Added
COOKING & PANTRY Condiments/Spices Olive Oil Sauces	DAIRY Shelf-Stable Milk Canned/Unopened Dry Milk	TOILETRIES Toilet Paper Tissues Paper Towels
BABY SUPPLIES Formula Baby Food/Snacks Diapers	PANTRY STAPLES Peanut Butter Jelly/Jams Juices (100% Fruit)	IMPORTANT INFORMATION - Let's promote healthy eating! Choose foods that are low in sugar/sodium and free of high fructose corn syrup. - Only tins, cans, or plastic. - NO GLASS.

631.582.3653 | www.licares.org



In collaboration with Assemblyman Steve Stern, Chairman of the NYS Assembly Veterans' Affairs Committee and Half Hollow Hills Community Library.





Veterans' Affairs Committee Updates

Bills Voted Out of Committee for the 2026 Session

A9490, STERN

Chapter 666 of the Laws of 2025 requires DVS to provide information on its website about volunteer opportunities for veterans to serve as volunteer firefighters or EMS providers. This chapter amendment clarifies the information that DVS would be required to post, while maintaining the purpose of the legislation – allowing veterans to use their skills to help their communities.

SIGNED INTO LAW 2-13-2026

A9489, STERN

This bill would amend Chapter 677 of the Laws of 2025, which established a real property tax exemption for service members performing active duty in a combat zone, to facilitate implementation.

SIGNED INTO LAW 3-27-2026

A3397A, RAGA

This legislation would facilitate additional entries on the New York State Veterans Memorial Registry. This legislation will help make steps toward creating a more expansive list of all veteran memorials and monuments in New York State, resulting in the honoring of veterans, the education of the public, and the promotion of tourism.

PASSED ASSEMBLY 2-03-2026

A8057A, BRONSON

This bill establishes a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Veterans Coordinator to complete work under the direction of the Commissioner regarding the unique needs of LGBT veterans.

A10142, STERN

Legislation which would require the New York State Department of Veterans' Services, in consultation with the Department of Health, to evaluate veteran healthcare in New York State.

PASSED ASSEMBLY 5-29-2026

A10163, LAVINE

This legislation directs the New York State Department of Veterans' Services to conduct a mandatory pre-release briefing for veterans incarcerated in state correctional institutions that explains federal and state veterans' benefits and how eligible individuals and families may access these benefits.

PASSED ASSEMBLY 4-28-2026



Veterans' Affairs Committee Updates

A10362A, GRIFFIN

This legislation would review the services that are currently available to veterans with service-connected disabilities by state and local veterans' service agencies and identify any deficiencies in the availability, accessibility and delivery of these services.

PASSED ASSEMBLY 3-16-2026

A10418, STERN

This bill seeks to expand and improve the operation of the Veterans' Services Commission.

PASSED ASSEMBLY 3-16-2026

A10420, CASHMAN

Legislation which would provide greater assistance to veterans in upgrading their character discharge, changing their reason for discharge or seeking any other relief available through the Discharge Review Board or Board for Correction of Military or Naval records for their branch of service on the federal level.

PASSED ASSEMBLY 3-16-2026

A8365A, LEVENBERG

This legislation would permit a veteran living in another state who has a family member residing in New York State to apply to join a New York State Veterans Home, provided that the immediate family member has lived in New York State for at least one year.

A9645A, LAVINE

Codifies and operationalizes a statewide Veteran Suicide Mortality Review Board that systematically reviews veteran suicide deaths, identifies trends and systemic gaps and issues actionable recommendations to save lives.

PASSED ASSEMBLY 6-01-2026

A11022, STERN

This bill would require the Department of Veterans' Services and Department of Economic Development to make the information about federal and state programs available to businesses that employ veterans more widely available.

PASSED ASSEMBLY 5-04-2026



Veterans' Affairs Committee Updates

A5578, Hunter

This bill would expand the list of acceptable documents that a veteran may use to demonstrate eligibility for an additional 10% property tax exemption for service in a combat theater or combat zone of operations to include a DD-214 indicating such service, federal combat pay or tax records, and other military service records approved by the commissioner of taxation and finance.

PASSED ASSEMBLY 5-20-2026

A8061, BRONSON

This bill requires the Department of Veterans' Services to create a women veterans history trail to recognize and celebrate the history of women in military service.

PASSED ASSEMBLY 5-29-2026

A11225-A, SCHIAVONI

Legislation which would increase the statewide goal for participation on state contracts by service-disabled veteran-owned business enterprises from six percent to eight percent.

PASSED ASSEMBLY 5-28-2026

A11294, STERN

A bill which would establish the position of Memorial Affairs Coordinator within the Department of Veterans' Services to help ensure that all veterans and service members receive the proper burial and funeral services to which they are entitled.



To view our digital newsletter, with all embedded links, please scan the QR code below:

