

New York State Assembly
Carl E. Heastie
Speaker

Committee on
Veterans' Affairs

Michael G. DenDekker
Chair

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

COMMITTEES
Aging
Alcoholism and Drug Abuse
Governmental Employees
Labor



MICHAEL G. DENDEKKER
Assemblymember 34th District

CHAIR
Veterans' Affairs Committee

December 15, 2017

Honorable Carl Heastie
Speaker
New York State Assembly
Room 932, Legislative Office Building
Albany, New York 12248

Dear Mr. Speaker:

It is with great pleasure that I forward to you the 2017 Annual Report of the New York State Standing Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Several significant pieces of legislation became law this year, including legislation to ensure that veterans are aware of their ability to utilize state-operated veterans homes, allowing for the removal of the ten year limit for real property tax exemptions for cold war veterans, and Chapter 352 of the Laws of New York, which requires the report submitted by the Division of Service Disabled Veterans to be updated annually.

The Committee also advanced legislation to require the Division of Veterans' Affairs to post contact information for each New York state veterans' home on its website and to require the Division of Service-Disabled Veterans' Business Development to issue a report to the Governor and the Legislature regarding the businesses participating in contracts for goods and services.

While a number of our legislative goals were achieved this past session, much work remains to be done. In 2018, the Committee will focus on helping veterans who have recently been discharged to readjust to civilian life and the Committee also will continue to examine issues related to both older veterans and women veterans.

I wish to extend my appreciation and many thanks to the members of the Committee, the Committee staff, and the veterans of New York State, and to you, Mr. Speaker, for your unwavering support for veterans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael G. DenDekker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

Michael DenDekker
Member of Assembly

ANNUAL REPORT
NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY
STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Honorable Michael DenDekker
Chair

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. COMMITTEE JURISDICTION AND SUMMARY4

II. 2017 LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS.....5

III. BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS.....7

IV. BILLS THAT PASSED THE ASSEMBLY ONLY14

V. BILLS REPORTED BY OTHER COMMITTEES
THAT BECAME A LAW.....16

VI. HONORING VETERANS THROUGH LEGISLATIVE
RESOLUTIONS.....18

VII. HONORING SERVICEMEN AND WOMEN THROUGH LEGISLATIVE
RESOLUTIONS.....19

VIII. MEMORIALIZING THE GOVERNOR TO PROCLAIM VETERAN RELATED
EVENTS.....21

IX. OTHER ACTIVITIES BY THE VETERANS’ COMMITTEE.....24

 A. Subcommittee on Women Veterans

 B. Public Hearings and Roundtables

 C. Assembly Chamber Veterans-Related Events

X. OUTLOOK FOR 2018.....26

APPENDIX A.....27

APPENDIX B.....28

APPENDIX C.....30

I. COMMITTEE JURISDICTION AND SUMMARY

The Assembly Standing Committee on Veterans' Affairs evaluates legislation affecting nearly one million New York State residents who unselfishly served their nation in the United States armed forces, including 63,899 New York State women. The Committee seeks to safeguard programs and promote legislation to benefit veterans and their families. In addition, the Committee maintains an ongoing dialogue with the veteran community and addresses issues affecting the lives of New York State veterans.

Veterans are affected by a number of titles of New York State statute, principally: Civil Service Law, Executive Law, Military Law, Education Law, Real Property Tax Law, Public Health Law, and Retirement and Social Security Law. Amendments to the State constitution that would affect veterans are also considered by the Committee. New York State currently offers a variety of veterans' assistance programs, including a real property tax exemption program, educational assistance for certain veterans and their family members, and a state veterans' nursing home program.

This past legislative session, the Committee held five committee meetings at which it considered 105 bills. Seven passed both houses of the Legislature; seven were signed into law by the Governor. The Committee was represented at the New York State Legislators Pearl Harbor Memorial Journey in October.

While the Committee has jurisdiction over legislation that affects veterans' benefits and programs that help veterans and their families, the Committee does not work alone. Some initiatives advanced by individual veterans and veterans' service organizations are referred to other standing committees, such as the committees on Governmental Operations, Transportation, Real Property Taxation, Health, Governmental Employees, Environmental Conservation, Election Law, Small Business, Mental Health, Labor, and Tourism, Parks, Arts, and Sports Development. As a result, the Committee's chair, members, and staff work closely with other committees to ensure that this unique population's needs are met.

II. 2017 LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

A. Real Property Tax Exemption for Certain Veterans

The veteran's real property tax exemption has a long history in New York State. Veterans' tax exemptions are available to men and women who served in the armed forces of this country dating back to the time of the American Revolution.

Virtually all real property tax exemptions granted to veterans in New York State fall into three categories: the fixed dollar amount "eligible funds" category (Real Property Tax Exemption Section 458); the percentage-of-exemption "alternative" category (Real Property Tax Law Section 458-A) and the "Cold War veterans' percentage-of exemption value" category (Real Property Tax Law Section 458-B).

Four pieces of legislation affecting the various real property tax exemptions were enacted into law this year.

- 1. Informs Assessors that Veterans From Certain Conflicts are Eligible for Veterans Exemptions** This measure would require the Division of Veterans' Affairs, in conjunction with the Department of Taxation and Finance, within thirty days of this measure and at least annually thereafter, to remind assessors that the Persian Gulf conflict referenced in Section 458-a of the Real Property Tax Law includes, but is not limited to, hostilities in Afghanistan and Iraq, also known as Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation New Dawn and Operation Inherent Resolve. (A.4859/Barrett; Chapter 286 of the Laws of 2017)
- 2. Expansion of the Eligible Funds Exemption To Add School Taxes By Local Option** This law expands the eligible funds exemption to taxes levied by local school districts. The bill would allow those districts to conduct a public hearing regarding the tax exemption and, after such hearing, allow the governing body of the school district to pass a resolution to provide the exemption. Qualified veterans living within the school district that has adopted the resolution would have the same exemption from school districts as they received from their local tax districts.(A.5135/ Cusick; Chapter 376 of the Laws of 2017)
- 3. Property Tax Exemption for Certain Veterans** This measure would allow towns by local option to extend the alternative veterans exemption to veterans who served on active duty pursuant to Executive Order 11519 of March 23, 1970 signed by President Nixon. Currently, counties, cities, villages, and school districts have authority to adopt a local law or resolution. (A.7001/ DenDekker; Chapter 141 of the Laws of 2017)
- 4. Cold War Veterans Real Property Tax Exemption** This law allows a municipality or school district that has adopted a local law or resolution to grant the Cold War veterans exemption for a ten-year period to adopt another local law

or resolution providing that the exemption authorized previously applies to qualifying owners of qualifying real property as long as they remain qualifying owners, without regard to such ten-year limitation. (A.6510-A/ D’Urso; Chapter 290 of the Laws of 2017)

B. Information for Veterans

Benefits for veterans are not automatically granted. Benefits must be applied for by the veteran or by a member of the veteran’s family. Providing information to veterans and their family members about the various benefits on the federal, state and local level is a critical responsibility of those offering said benefits.

1. New York State Veterans’ Nursing Homes Options to Be Listed on the Division of Veterans’ Affairs Website

This law requires the Division of Veterans’ Affairs to include contact information on the five State Veterans’ Nursing Homes on the webpage entitled “Information for Veterans Concerning Health Care Options.” (A.5165/Pheffer-Amato; Chapter 287 of the Laws of 2017)

2. Report Submitted By the Division of Service-Disabled Veterans’ Business Development Program

This law requires that additional information be included in the required annual report submitted by the Division of Service-Disabled Veterans’ Business Development Program. The additional information includes the level of service-disabled veteran-owned businesses participating in each agency’s contracts for goods and services and on activities of the division and efforts by each contracting agency to promote utilization of service-disabled veteran-owned businesses and to promote and increase participation by certified service-disabled veteran-owned businesses with respect to state contracts and subcontracts. The report may recommend new activities and programs to effectuate the purposes of this law. (A.7008-B/DenDekker; Chapter 352 of the Laws of 2017)

C. Miscellaneous

1. Conspicuous Service Cross License Plates

This law authorizes the Department of Motor Vehicles to issue distinctive license plates for veterans who have received the New York State Conspicuous Service Cross medal. (A.8005-A/ Cusick; Chapter 232 of the Laws of New York)

III. BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

A. Division of Veterans' Affairs

The Division of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) assists, counsels, and advocates for veterans, military personnel, and their families.

1. Veteran Counseling Program

The Veteran Counseling Services Program provides counseling and services through a statewide network of State veteran counselors. The counselors, all of whom are veterans and support staff, help veterans complete and file applications for state, federal, and private benefits and services. Counselors also serve veterans through outreach to the federal Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers, senior centers, state and local veterans' nursing homes, and public assistance offices. State veteran counselors help ensure that active duty military personnel and their families receive the supplemental benefits to which they are entitled.

The SFY 2017-18 budget appropriated \$5,821,000 for services and expenses related to the Veteran Counseling Program in the State Operations Fund and \$5,022,000 from the General and Special Revenue Funds for services in Aid to Localities funds.

State veteran counselors receive professional training in veterans' benefits counseling and are accredited by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

2. County and City Veterans' Service Agencies

County and city veterans' service agencies are mandated by state law to inform members of the armed forces, reserves, organized militia, and veterans and their families about available education, retraining, medical, and other rehabilitative services and facilities.

The State budget for SFY 2017-18 includes a sub-allocation of \$1,177,000 for the payment of aid to County and City Veterans' Service Agencies in Aid to Localities funding.

3. Monroe County Veterans Outreach Center

The Monroe County Veterans Outreach Center in Rochester, New York, is the nation's oldest community-based outreach center serving veterans of all eras. The Outreach Center provides counseling services for successful reintegration of veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts into the community, short-term psychological counseling for veterans and their immediate families, residential programs for homeless veterans, and an alternative to incarceration programs through the Rochester veterans' court.

The SFY 2017-18 included a sub-allocation of \$250,000 for the services and expenses related to the Veterans Outreach Center, Inc., in Aid to Localities funding. The Legislature added an additional \$250,000 for services and expenses for the Veterans Outreach Center Inc. (Monroe County).

4. Vietnam Veterans of America New York State Council

The Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) is the nation's only congressionally-chartered veterans' service organization dedicated to the needs of Vietnam-era veterans and their families. The council provides assistance in navigating the various benefits available to veterans of all eras and conflicts and their family members.

The SFY 2017-18 budget included \$40,000 to the VVA New York State Council in Aid to Localities funding. This was a legislative addition to the proposed executive budget.

5. Legal Services New York City (LSNYC) Veterans Justice Project (VJP)

The Veterans Justice Project (VJP) identifies systemic barriers that prevent housing stability, economic security and basic survival, and challenges them through coordinated advocacy. The program addresses the following issues: HUD-VA supportive housing issues; evictions; foreclosures; unemployment insurance denials; debt collection/wage garnishment; child support; wills and powers of attorney; divorce; custody; special education; and Social Security/SSI. Since the project was launched in 2011, at least 2000 veterans and their family members have been assisted.

The SFY 2017-18 budget included \$100,000 to the VJP. This was a legislative addition to the budget proposed by the executive.

6. Warrior Salute

CDS Monarch in Webster, New York developed Warrior Salute to help service members and their families with personalized life and job transition support. Warrior Salute helps veterans to regain their lives and dreams by providing clinical and family support services, quality employment opportunities, and temporary housing.

The SFY 2017-18 budget included \$200,000 to the Warrior Salute in Aid to Localities funding. This was a legislative addition to the budget proposed by the executive.

7. Services & Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Elders (SAGE)

Services & Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Elders (SAGE) has established a comprehensive program for New York State's LGBT elder veterans which provides legal counsel, benefit advocacy, and enhanced wrap-around services in order to improve these veterans' income security and overall well-being.

In addition, representation will enable LGBT veterans currently on public assistance, Medicaid, or other state subsidy programs, to apply for veterans' benefits including, but not limited to income, medical, spousal, and survivor benefits. The SAGE program will provide assistance to LGBT veterans by upgrading their discharge if it is necessary for them to access federal VA benefits.

The SFY 2017-18 budget included \$100,000 to implement SAGE's comprehensive program for New York State's LGBT elder veterans. This was a legislative addition to the budget proposed by the executive.

8. Legal Services of the Hudson Valley and Military Families Project

The Veterans and Military Families Advocacy Project, Legal Services of the Hudson Valley provides a full range of civil legal services that resolve the unique legal problems faced by veterans and their families. This program covers more than 120,000 veterans living in Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster and Westchester counties.

The SFY 2017-18 budget included \$250,000 for this program.

9. New York State Defenders Association Veterans Defense Program

The Veterans Defense Program (VDP) helps the most vulnerable of our veterans by assisting defense attorneys in providing justice to veterans with mental health issues arising out of their military service and facilitating treatment to begin healing the wounds of war.

The New York State Defenders Association is providing training and expert legal assistance to attorneys in 120 county-based public defenders offices, legal aid agencies, and assigned counsel staff.

In the budget for SFY 2017-18, \$500,000 was appropriated for this important veterans' program. This was a legislative addition to the budget proposed by the executive.

10. Helmets to Hardhats

Helmets to Hardhats is a charitable corporation that assists transitioning active duty veterans as well as members of the Reserves or National Guard to gain employment with the building trades. The program has been actively placing military veterans into building trades affiliated apprenticeship programs across the country since 2003 and since 2013 in the City of New York.

The Helmets to Hardhats program fills a void in conventional services available to New York City veterans. Without the commitment of the construction industry to this program, specifically in terms of funding and placement, the pathway to a middle class career would be hindered by a disorganized and decentralized non-union sector of the construction industry. The program streamlines the pathway and provides invaluable

support for those seeking entry to a career in union construction. With funds appropriated in the 2016-17 fiscal year, the program will be expanded on a statewide basis.

In the SFY 2017-18 adopted budget \$200,000 was appropriated for this program to expand state wide.

11. Veterans Miracle Center

The Veterans Miracle Center located in Albany, New York, provides veterans, active duty military personnel and their immediate family with free clothing, personal care items, household items, ambulatory equipment, and toys. It also has counseling specialists that provide free personal development such as financial planning, employment and housing information.

In the SFY 2017-18 adopted budget \$25,000 was appropriated for this program.

12. Indigent Burial Services

Chapter 579 of the Laws of 2015 and Chapter 29 of the Laws of 2016 were enacted to provide dignified burials to indigent veterans whereby congressional-chartered veterans' organizations are selected to provide these services by the county and state of New York.

This budget includes an appropriation for the implementation of these chapters.

The SFY 2017-18 budget sub-allocated \$100,000 to the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance for the payment of burial services for indigent veterans.

13. Veteran-to-Veteran Support Services

The concept of Veteran Treatment Courts started in Buffalo, New York. Currently, there are 29 of these courts statewide to address the needs of veterans who find themselves involved in the criminal justice system due to addiction, PTSD, brain injuries and mental illness. These special courts help veterans by linking them with community service and support, as well as local, state and federal agencies specializing in veterans' affairs.

One of the key components to these courts are veterans who serve as volunteer mentors to the defendants. These individuals provide support and motivation to the veterans who are currently in the court system and help them not only navigate the criminal justice system but help the veteran reintegrate into civilian society.

This appropriation supports veteran-to-veteran programs maintained by veterans service organizations, connects veteran defendants to treatment and support services directed by the criminal justice system, provides services to support veterans to avoid involvement with the criminal justice system, supports programs providing counseling and advocacy

activities for veterans, and provides assistance in securing linkages at the national, state and local level.

The SFY 2017-18 budget allocated \$1,000,000 to the payment of Veteran-to-Veteran Support Services.

14. Access to Justice Initiative

The unmet demand for legal services for veterans and service members remains significant. The Justice for Heroes proposal is a competitive grant initiative among the law school clinics in the State of New York.

The SFY 2017-18 budget allocated \$250,000 for the payment and services of the access to justice initiative.

15. Veterans of Foreign Wars, NYS Chapter Field Service Operation

In order to be a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, a person must be a U.S. citizen or U.S. National, have served in the Armed Forces of the United States and received an honorable or general discharge and served in war, campaign or expedition on foreign soil or in hostile waters. A veteran service officer of the VFW helps veterans navigate the various benefits available on the federal, state and local level.

The SFY 2017-18 budget allocated \$120,000 for the services and expenses of the New York State Veterans of Foreign Wars Chapter Field Service Operation.

16. Veterans' Education Program

The Veterans' Education Program is operated by the Division of Veterans' Affairs. The program is located in Albany and New York City, and investigates and approves post-secondary educational and vocational institutions for the use of the Division's education benefits. It also approves on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs.

The SFY 2017-18 budget appropriated \$2,025,000 for the expenses associated with the operation of this program in State Operation funding.

17. Administration Program

The Administration Program is primarily composed of two components, Supplemental Burial Benefits and Gold Star Annuity Benefits. In addition, the appropriation also provides for the funding of administrative personnel and operational expenses.

The SFY 2017-18 budget appropriated \$480,000 under State Operations funding and \$999,000 under Aid To Localities funding for these purposes.

18. New York State Supplemental Burial Benefits

New York State offers a supplemental burial benefits program to eligible families of military personnel killed in combat or wounded in combat but died from their wounds outside of the combat zone.

In the SFY 2017-18 budget, \$400,000 was sub-allocated for this program and for transfer of such amounts as are necessary to state operations for related administrative expenses.

19. Gold Star Parents

Gold Star Parents refer to parents who have lost children to the ravages of war and are unable to rely upon their children in their twilight years. This appropriation supports the payment of a \$500 annuity to a Gold Star Parent. Up to two parents may claim this annual benefit.

The SFY 2017-18 budget sub-allocated \$599,000 to the payment of the Gold Star Parent annuities.

The SFY 2017-18 budget allocated \$200,000 for the services and expenses of the New York State Defenders Association Veterans Defense Program.

B. Division of Military and Naval Affairs

1. New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center

The New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center is located in the Saratoga Armory in Saratoga Springs, New York.

In the budget for SFY 2017-18, \$241,000 was included for operating expenses associated with the New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center for non-personal service in State Operations funding. Also, \$1,000,000 was appropriated for: services and expenses related to youth academic and drug demand reduction programs; the New York Guard; the New York Naval Militia; the New York State Military Museum; the Veterans Research Center; and, the preservation and restoration of historic artifacts.

C. Department of Mental Health Office of Mental Health

Peer-To-Peer Veterans Counseling Program

The PFC Joseph Dwyer PTSD Peer-To-Peer Veterans Counseling Program, which provides “peer-to-peer” counseling between veterans who personally understand the effects of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury, was first funded in

the 2012 budget. It has been operating in four test counties: Suffolk, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Jefferson.

In the SFY 2017-18 budget, \$3,090,000 was appropriated to fund the four test counties, as well as eleven additional counties: Broome, Chautauqua, Dutchess, Erie, Monroe, Nassau, Niagara, Onondaga, Orange, Putnam, and Westchester. Also included in the funding is the University at Albany School of Social Welfare.

**D. Department of Family Assistance
Office of Children and Families**

American Legion Boys State Program

Boys State of the American Legion is the Leadership Action Program wherein qualified male high school juniors participate in a practical government course designed to develop a working knowledge of government. The New York State program is held each summer at Morrisville State College.

The SFY 2017-18 budget included \$150,000 for this youth program under the Morrisville Auxiliary of State University College of Agriculture and Technology at Morrisville, New York for the American Legion Boys State Program. This was a legislative addition to the budget proposed by the executive.

E. Department of Agriculture and Markets

Cornell Small Farms Program

Monies were added in the adopted budget to help establish up to five veteran-owned small farms through a first in the nation pilot program. Returning veterans and those seeking a career change would be encouraged to try agriculture; in return, the veterans would be available to train additional veteran farmers in future years under this program.

The SFY 2017-18 budget included \$115,000 for the Cornell Small Farms Program.

ARTICLE VII LANGUAGE BILL

**A.3009-C Budget
Chapter 59 of the Laws of 2017
Part J**

Authorizes the Chancellor of the State University of New York rather than the State Education Department (SED) to certify and approve the distribution of funds for veterans' homes operated by SUNY. There is only one such home, the Long Island State Veterans Home, located on the campus of the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

IV. BILLS THAT PASSED THE ASSEMBLY ONLY

A. Veterans' Affairs Committee

1. Services Available to Veterans (A.1206 Cusick; Passed Assembly)

This bill would require all subdivisions of the State to inquire, when dealing with a client or customer, whether he, she or a family member is a veteran, and then to inform that individual of the services and opportunities made available by the Division of Veterans' Affairs. Any new forms created after the effective date of this act would contain the following questions: "Have you served in the United States Armed Forces?" and "Has someone in your family served in the United States military?"

2. Information on Special Veterans Populations (A.2739 Lavine; Passed Assembly)

This bill would require information regarding specific mental and physical health issues including: post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, and any other brain-injuries and spina bifida, to be included on the New York State Department of Health's website through the Veterans Health Care Information Program. The measure would also require the Department of Corrections and Community Services to collect the military background and circumstances of persons subject to their jurisdiction.

3. Interagency Council (A.5931 Ramos; Passed Assembly)

This bill would establish an Interagency Coordinating Council for service-disabled veterans to provide accessible, coordinated, and specialized services from multiple state and local agencies to service-disabled veterans.

B. Governors Program Bills Veterans' Affairs Committee

1. Expand Eligibility for the Gold Star Parent Annuity (A.7570 Wallace; Passed Assembly)

This bill would amend the Executive Law to expand the eligibility for the Gold Star Parent Annuity Program. The bill would remove a limitation under current law that caps the maximum total at \$1,000 annually.

2. Preventing Pension Poaching Scams (A.7799 Mosley; Passed Assembly)

This bill would prohibit any person helping veterans from charging a fee for providing assistance in seeking veteran's benefits, except when allowed by VA rules and regulations.

C. Election Committee

**Military Ballots
(A.3052 Cusick; Passed Assembly)**

This bill would ensure that New York State's Election Law complies with the federal Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment State Act. It would amend certain deadlines to facilitate the timely transmission of ballots to military voters stationed overseas.

D. Health Committee

**Disposition of Human Remains
(A.2611 Gottfried; Passed Assembly)**

This bill provides for clarification of the designation as a human remains agent. It clarifies that the written instrument designating an agent does not have to be the form appearing in section 4201 of the Health Law and it also removes the requirement for a second witness. If enacted, a "DD93" form used in the United States military would satisfy New York State law.

V. BILLS REPORTED BY OTHER COMMITTEES THAT BECAME A LAW

**A. Corporations Committee
Public Listing Military Related Projects
Chapter 405 of the Laws of New York
(A.6038 / Dinowitz)**

The law would require a public listing of the certificate of incorporations that have been approved by the Adjutant General for purposes of soliciting funds or other benefits for the armed forces of the United States or any foreign country.

**B. Governmental Employees Committee
Waiver of Application Fees for Veterans
Chapter 404 of the Laws of New York
(A.1105-B/ Hunter)**

This law provides that the New York State Civil Service Commission will waive the state application fee for civil service exams for original appointments taken by honorably and/or general discharged veterans.

**C. Governmental Operations Committee
POW/MIA Chair and Plaque in the New York State Capitol
Chapter 407 of the Laws of New York
(A.7506 / DenDekker)**

This law directs the Commissioner of the Office of General Services to place a Prisoner of War/Missing In Action chair and plaque in the State Capitol building in Albany, New York.

**Additional Paid Leave
Chapter 406 of the Laws of New York
(A.3198-A / Paulin)**

This law provides for additional leave for healthcare-related services for public officers or employees employed by the state who served in a combat theater or combat zone of operations related to such duty, not exceeding eight work days in any one calendar year.

**D. Health Committee
Medical Marijuana for PTSD
Chapter 403 of the Laws of New York
(A.7006/ Gottfried)**

The Public Health Law specifies ten medical conditions that are eligible for the use of medical marijuana; chronic pain has been added by the Department of Health. This measure makes post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) an eligible condition under the state medical marijuana law.

E. Mental Health Committee
Developmental Disability Programs for Children of Military Members
Chapter 256 of the Laws of 2017
(A.7927/ Englebright)

This law seeks to clarify the goals of Chapter 488 of the Laws of 2016 to alleviate barriers experienced by military members in New York State by allowing dependents of a military service member to retain eligibility for service regardless of leaving the State as long as they retain residency and remain eligible for service.

F. Transportation Committee
Distinctive License Plates for Members of AMVETS
Chapter 105 of the Laws of 2017
(A.282-A/ Santabarbara)

This law authorizes the Department of Motor Vehicles to issue distinctive license plates for those veterans who are members of the AMVETS organization.

Distinctive License Plates for Those Who Served in Iraq or Afghanistan
Chapter 107 of the Laws of 2017
(A.1112-B/S.2139-B Paulin)

This law authorizes the Department of Motor Vehicles to issue distinctive license plates for those veterans who served in the Iraq War or Afghanistan War.

VI. HONORING VETERANS THROUGH LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTIONS

A. Urging the New York State Congressional Delegation to Pass the Deborah Sampson Act of 2017, (S.681) (Resolution No.519; Hunter)

This resolution urges the New York State Congressional Delegation to pass the Deborah Sampson Act of 2017 (S.681). The Deborah Sampson Act of 2017 would provide women veterans access to the Veterans Administration facilities. Such legislation would also ensure that women veterans receive the benefits that they have earned through their service.

B. Urging the New York State Congressional Delegation to Pass the Blue Water Vietnam Veterans Act of 2017, H.R. 299. (Resolution No. 180, DenDekker)

This resolution urges the New York State Congressional Delegation to Pass the Blue Water Vietnam Veterans Act of 2017, H.R. 299. The Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2017 would restore the legal presumption of Agent Orange exposure for those veterans who served in the bays, harbors, and territorial seas of Vietnam. This federal legislation would correct a Vietnam Affairs (VA) policy decision implemented in 2002 that unilaterally stripped these veterans of the presumption of exposure granted by the Agent Orange Act of 1991.

D. Commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the Civil Air Patrol. (Resolution No.185; Lupardo)

The Civil Air Patrol (CAP) was founded on December 1, 1941, one week before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, to supplement the United States Military during World War II. This resolution would celebrate and recognize the accomplishments of the CAP. The CAP provides exceptional educational opportunities for youth through its Cadet Program. It is nearly 24,000 members strong and provides access to top national summer flight academies to learn to fly powered or glider aircraft, and to more than 30 national programs encouraging leadership and careers in aviation.

E. Honoring the members of the Setauket Spy Ring for their bravery during the American Revolutionary War to be celebrated with the dedication of the Route 25 A as Washington's Spy Trail on May 18, 2017. (Resolution No.444; Englebright)

The Secrecy surrounding the Setauket Culper Spy Ring and its members precluded recognition of its vital contributions to the favorable outcome of the Revolutionary War and creation of the nation. These meritorious men and women risked their lives and families to serve their young country at its most precarious moments to ensure that liberty and freedom would shine in the years ahead. This resolution would honor the members of the Setauket Spy Ring for their bravery during the American Revolutionary War to be celebrated with the dedication of Route 25A as Washington's Spy Trail on Thursday, May 18, 2017, at the Brewster House.

VII. HONORING SERVICEMEN AND SERVICEWOMEN THROUGH LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTIONS

A. Commending Jerry Donnellan upon the occasion of his retirement after 30 years of distinguished service to Rockland County's Veterans Service Agency. (Resolution No. 674; Zebrowski)

In 1968, Jerry Donnellan was drafted into the United States Army where he proudly served his country during the Vietnam War. After his honorable discharge, Jerry Donnellan spent more than a year recovering and undergoing rehabilitation after his many grievous injuries. For his courageous service, he was awarded with multiple Purple Heart Medals. Jerry Donnellan served as the Director for Rockland County's Veterans Service agency where he established several programs for local veterans such as the Memorial Day Watchfires and a veterans health clinic. He also helped to raise awareness about post-traumatic stress disorder, and opened the first homeless shelter for veterans in Valley Cottage (Missing America). This resolution would honor the admirable efforts and contributions made by Jerry Donnellan upon the occasion of his retirement after 30 years of distinguished service to Rockland County's Veterans Service Agency.

B. Celebrating the life and accomplishments of retired Lieutenant Colonel Lionel H. Fallows, meritorious veteran, distinguished citizen and devoted member of his community. (Resolution No.679; Santabarbara)

Lionel H. Fallows proudly served his country as a member of the United States Army in the Asiatic Pacific Theater of Operations and with the Army of Occupation in Korea during World War II. Professionally, Lionel H. Fallows was associated with the Militia Association of the State of New York, the National Guard Association of the United States, and the Air Force Association. This resolution would celebrate the life and accomplishments of retired Lieutenant Colonel Lionel H. Fallows, meritorious veteran, distinguished citizen and devoted member of his community.

C. Commemorating the heroics of Rear Admiral C. Wade McClusky with the unveiling of a statue in his likeness as part of a new public memorial dedicated to local war heroes. (Resolution No.700; Kearns)

Rear Admiral C. Wade was a true American patriot, soldier, and citizen. In 1929, he began his distinguished career as a Naval Aviator and he has served in several air units and command staffs, and has been an instructor at the Naval Academy and at shore facilities. Rear Admiral C. Wade McClusky was awarded the Navy Cross, one of the military's highest decorations. This resolution would commemorate the heroics of Rear C. Wade McClusky with the unveiling of a statue in his likeness as part of a new public memorial dedicated to local war heroes.

D. Commending the Capital Region Chamber of Commerce upon the occasion of celebrating the Military Appreciation event on June 20, 2017. (Resolution No.608; Santabarbara)

The Unified Military Affairs Council program highlights the importance of the military presence in the Capital Region and helps ensure its long-term viability and success. The program increases public knowledge of the contributions made by military units in the Capital Region, all of which impact our global, national, state and regional economy. The Military Appreciation event was held June 20, 2017 in Albany, New York. This resolution would commend the Capital Region Chamber of Commerce upon the occasion of celebrating the Military Appreciation event on June 20, 2017.

VIII. MEMORIALIZING THE GOVERNOR TO PROCLAIM VETERAN-RELATED EVENTS

A. Memorializing Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim New York State as a Purple Heart State. (Resolution No. 89; DenDekker)

Members of the Armed Services from the State of New York who have served so valiantly and honorably in our nation's wars, as well as in the preservation of peace in peacetime, deserve a special salute from this Legislative Body. The Purple Heart medal is the oldest military decoration in the world, and it is awarded in the name of the United States military who have been wounded or killed in action. This resolution memorializes Governor M. Cuomo to proclaim New York State as a Purple Heart State.

B. Memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim February 3, 2017, as Four Chaplains Day in the State of New York (Resolution No.105; Wallace)

Each of the Four Chaplains was awarded the Purple Heart and the Distinguished Service Cross posthumously. The citation of each reads "For extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an enemy of the United States. On the night of the 3rd of February, 1943, a loaded troop transport was torpedoed, without warning, by an enemy submarine in the North Atlantic and began to sink rapidly. In the resulting confusion and darkness some men found themselves without life jackets and others became helpless through fear and the dread of plunging into the freezing water. These Four Chaplains heroically and calmly moved about the deck, encouraging the men and assisting them to abandon ship; after the available supply of life jackets was exhausted, they gave up their own; they remained aboard ship and went down with it, offering words of encouragement and prayers to the last." This resolution would memorialize Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim February 3, 2017, as Four Chaplains Day in the State of New York.

C. Memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim March 13, 2017, as K9 Veterans Appreciation day in the State of New York (Resolution No. 176; Santabarbara)

During World War I, dogs were used for the dangerous job of carrying messages throughout the vast network of trenches, as well as to provide comfort to our soldiers. An estimated 1,500 military working dogs were utilized by the United States Army during the Korean War, 4,000 during the Vietnam War, and over 500 dog teams have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. This resolution would memorialize Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim March 13, 2017, as K9 Veterans Appreciation Day in the State of New York.

D. Memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim April 9, 2017, as Yellow Ribbon day in the State of New York. (Resolution No. 226; McDonald)

Residents of New York State must never forget the courage with which these men and women fought for their country and endured cruelties and deprivation as they helped to

protect our nation, and to liberate millions from the threats of tyranny and terror, advancing the cause of freedom worldwide. This resolution would memorialize Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim April 9, 2017, as Yellow Ribbon Day in the State of New York.

E. Memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim Wednesday, March 29, 2017, as Vietnam Veteran’s Day in the State of New York (Resolution No.238; DenDekker)

The Vietnam War was fought in the Republic of Vietnam from 1961 to 1975, and involved North Vietnamese regular forces and Viet Cong guerrilla forces in armed conflict with the United States Armed Forces and the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. The United States Armed Forces became involved in Vietnam because the United States Government wanted to provide direct military support to the Government of Vietnam to defend itself against the growing Communist threat from North Vietnam. This resolution would pay tribute to the bravery, patriotism and sacrifice made by the men and women of the United States Armed Forces, both those still living and those who died in service to our great country.

F. Memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim May 15, 2017, as Blue Star Families’ Day in the State of New York. (Resolution No. 427; McLaughlin)

Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc. dates back to World War II and is a support organization for mothers of children serving or who have served in the United States military. During World War II, there were approximately 30,000 Blue Star Mothers, and several thousand during the Korean and Vietnam War. This resolution would memorialize Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim May 15, 2017, as Blue Star Families’ Day in the State of New York.

G. Memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim May 26, 2017, as Poppy Day in the State of New York, in conjunction with the observance of National Poppy Day. (Resolution No.504; DenDekker)

At the end of World War I, the American Legion adopted the poppy as a symbol of freedom and blood sacrificed by members of the Armed Forces in war. The poppy is well known in the United States, Britain, France, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand as the “Flower of Remembrance.” The poppy is an iconic symbol of honor for the sacrifices of our veterans which can be worn in memory of the fallen soldiers, and to honor those who fought for freedom. This resolution would pay tribute to the bravery, patriotism, and sacrifice made by men and women of the United States Armed Forces, and to memorialize Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim Friday, May 26, 2017 as Poppy Day in the State of New York.

H. Memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim June 2017, as Post-Traumatic Injury Awareness Month in the State of New York. (Resolution No. 568;DenDekker)

All United citizens in the state of New York possess the basic human right to the preservation of personal dignity. The diagnosis known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was first defined by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980 to commonly and more accurately understand and treat veterans who endured severe traumatic combat stress. This resolution memorializes Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim June 2017 as Post -Traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness month in the State of New York.

I. Memorializing Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim June 10, 2017, as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Day in the State of New York. (Resolution No. 576; Miller)

In 2010 and every year since, the United States Congress has designated June 10th as PTSD Awareness Day. According to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the purpose of PTSD Awareness Day is to raise public awareness of PTSD and effective treatments to help people affected by PTSD. This resolution memorializes Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim June 10, 2017 as PTSD Awareness Day in the state of New York.

J. Memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim June 2017, as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Month in the State of New York. (Resolution No.633; Simotas)

PTSD symptoms can be acute or long-term and include hyper-vigilance, panic attacks, intrusive memories, flashbacks, nightmares, insomnia, avoidance, dissociation, hopelessness, and intense feelings of guilt and shame. This resolution would proclaim June 2017, as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Month in the State of New York.

K. Memorializing Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim November 2017, as a Military Opportunities Month in the State of New York. (Resolution No.693; DenDekker)

In recognition of the fact that only 30 percent of the 32 million 18-24 year olds in the United States are eligible to serve their country, each person seeking to volunteer is critical to bolstering our national defense,. This resolution would proclaim November 2017 as Military Opportunities Month to illustrate the importance of open and supportive communication between the nation's military recruiters and high schools.

IX. OTHER ACTIVITIES OF THE VETERANS COMMITTEE

A. Subcommittee on Women Veterans

Assemblymember Pamela J. Hunter was appointed by Speaker Carl E. Heastie to chair the New York State Assembly Subcommittee on Women Veterans on May 5, 2017. Hunter is the only female veteran in the New York State Legislature having served in the United States Army from 1987 to 1990. She was honorably discharged and received a commendation and two achievement medals during her time in the armed forces.

The Subcommittee on Women Veterans sponsored the 24th annual Women Veterans Recognition Day on June 13, 2017. This year the Subcommittee held a special event to honor women veterans by hosting a luncheon to recognize and celebrate the brave women who have so valiantly served our nation. Guest speakers included Char Marx from Clear Path for Veterans; Corliss Dennis, Director of Onondaga County Veterans Services; and Jordanna Mallach, Special Programs Coordinator (including the job of the Women Veterans Coordinator) for the New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs. The keynote speaker was Maureen G. Murphy, Colonel, New York Air National Guard. Murphy is the Commander, 109th Mission Support Group located at the Stratton Air National Guard Base in Scotia, New York. She leads over 390 military and civilian personnel in support of the only ski-equipped aircraft in the Department of Defense. Col. Murphy spent four years on active duty before transferring to the Air Reserve Component in 1988.

At the beginning of the Session day, these veterans were introduced and received a standing ovation in the New York State Assembly Chamber.

The Assembly adopted the following two resolutions concerning women veterans:

- Assembly Resolution No. 601 by Assemblymember Hunter memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim June 12, 2017, as Women Veterans Recognition Day in the State of New York.
- Assembly Resolution No. 519 by Assemblymember Hunter was adopted to urge the New York State Congressional Delegation to support the Deborah Sampson Act, S.681. This federal act would change the VA's motto that excludes women; expand peer-to-peer assistance for women veterans; establish legal service partnerships and provide funding for low-income women veterans services; increase VA's capacity to provide newborn care; eliminate access barriers to VA health care faced by women veterans; and require gender-specific data tracking and reporting.

B. Public Hearing and Roundtable

In December 6, 2017, the New York State Assembly Standing Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Subcommittee on Women Veterans held a public hearing on the various

programs funded by the state of New York whose purpose is to help veterans readjust to civilian life. The Division of Veterans' Affairs and several organizations that have programs dedicated to veterans gave testimony before the committees.

**C. West Point Day
May 3, 2017**

During this annual tribute to the U.S. Military Academy's cadets and the role they play in the defense of this nation, the Assembly also commemorated New York State's 215 year association with the nation's most prestigious military academy located at West Point, on the historic west bank of the Hudson River. U.S. Military Academy Superintendent Lieutenant General Robert L. Caslen, Jr. spoke in the Assembly Chamber.

**D. 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Day in the State of New York
May 23, 2017**

On May 23, 2017, soldiers and officers from Fort Drum were in Albany for the sixth annual 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Day in the State Capitol. The mission was to highlight the special relationship between the State and the United States Army. Also present was the Fort Drum Regional Liaison Organization. On this day, several pieces of army equipment were displayed and demonstrated by various soldiers stationed at Fort Drum.

**E. The Capital Region Military Day At the Capitol
June 20, 2017**

On June 20, 2017, members of the Unified Military Affairs Council (UMAC) gave a military briefing to members of the New York State Veterans' Affairs Committee and the Capital District delegation concerning the bases located in the Capital District area.

UMAC supports the New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing, Naval Support Activity Saratoga Springs, Nuclear Power Training Unit Ballston Spa, and the Watervliet Arsenal, as well as other military units located in the Capital area.

X. OUTLOOK FOR 2018

The Standing Committee on Veterans' Affairs is looking forward to a productive year in 2018. The Committee will continue to work with the Division of Veterans' Affairs, the Division of Military and Naval Affairs, other state agencies, veterans' organizations, and individual veterans throughout New York State to develop programs and services to assist the veterans of this state.

The issues that the Committee intends to pursue include the following:

- outreach to older veterans;
- improving veterans' mental health and outreach programs to help veterans in need of specific care related to mental health, post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, and substance abuse;
- increasing awareness of mental health treatment programs for those veterans who suffer from military sexual trauma;
- increasing outreach to women veterans to better identify and respond to their needs; and
- outreach to recently discharged-veterans.

The Committee will continue to strive to address the needs of New York State's more than one million veterans and their families.

APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF ACTION ON ALL BILLS REFERRED TO THE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Final Action	Assembly Bills	Senate Bills	Total Bills
To Floor; Not Returning To Committee (FAVORABLE)	3	0	3
To Ways and Means	11	0	11
To Codes	1	0	1
To Rules	2	0	2
To Judiciary	0	0	0
Total	17	0	17
Bills Having Committee Reference Changed			
To	0	0	0
To	0	0	0
To	0	0	0
To	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0
Senate Bills Substituted or Recalled			
Substituted		1	1
Recalled		1	1
Total		2	2
Bills Defeated in Committee	0	0	0
Bills Held for Consideration With a Roll-Call Vote	0	0	0
Bills Never Reported, Died in Committee	64	19	83
Bills Having Enacting Clauses Stricken	1	0	1
Motions to Discharge Lost	0	0	0
Total Bills in Committee	82	21	103
Total Number of Committee Meetings Held	5		

APPENDIX B

BILLS THAT PASSED BOTH HOUSES AND WERE SIGNED INTO LAW

BILL NO.	SPONSOR	CHAPTER	DESCRIPTION
A.4859	Barrett	Ch.286	This measure would remind assessors that veterans from certain conflicts are eligible for veterans' exemptions.
A.5165	Pheffer-Amato	Ch.287	This measure would ensure that veterans are aware of their option to utilize state operated veterans nursing homes.
A.6510-A	D'Urso	Ch.290	This measure would allow a county, town, village or school district that has adopted a local law or resolution to grant the Cold War veterans exemption for a ten-year period, to adopt another local law or resolution providing for the exemption authorized previously to qualifying owners of qualifying real property for as long as they remain qualifying owners without regard to such ten year limitation.
A.7001	DenDekker	Ch.141	Allows towns to adopt a local law or resolution to include reserve veterans for the veteran alternative exemption who served on active duty under Executive Order 11519.
A.8005-A	Cusick	Ch.232	This measure would authorize the Department of Motor Vehicles to issue distinctive license plates for recipients of the New York State Conspicuous Service Cross.
A.7008-B	DenDekker	Ch.352	This measure would require the division of service-disabled veterans' business

			development to issue a report to the governor and the legislature regarding the businesses participating in contracts for goods and services.
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APPENDIX C

BILLS THAT PASSED THE ASSEMBLY ONLY

BILL NO.	SPONSOR	DESCRIPTION
A.1206	Cusick	Relates to use of personal confidential information received from veterans or their family members receiving services from the state and political subdivisions thereof.
A.2739	Lavine	Provides additional benefits for veterans; provides for services and counseling related to post-traumatic stress disorder and brain injuries; requires reports to the legislature concerning the number of veterans who are incarcerated.
A.5931	Ramos	Establishes the New York State Interagency Coordinating Council for service-disabled veterans; defines the powers and duties of the council and requires an annual report by the council to the governor, the temporary president of the senate and the speaker of the assembly.
A.7570	Wallace	Eliminates the \$1,000 limitation on the annual annuity payable to a gold star parent.
A.7799	Mosley	Prohibits any person from charging a fee for providing assistance in seeking veterans benefits, except as authorized by federal law, rule or regulation; provides any violation of such provisions constitutes a deceptive business practice; requires full disclosure of the terms of any such assistance. Division of Veterans Affairs-Program Bill