

New York State Assembly

Carl E. Heastie

Speaker



Committee on
Veterans' Affairs

Michael DenDekker

Chair

2016

ANNUAL REPORT



MICHAEL G. DENDEKKER
Assemblymember 34th District

CHAIR
Veterans' Affairs Committee

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

COMMITTEES
Aging
Alcoholism & Drug Abuse
Governmental Employees
Labor
Transportation

December 15, 2016

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 2016 Annual Report of the New York State Standing Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Several significant pieces of legislation became law this year, including legislation to require the Division of Veterans' Affairs to establish, operate and maintain a free mobile application to provide information on veterans' benefits.

The Committee also advanced legislation to require the Division of Veterans' Affairs to maintain an annually updated fact sheet entitled "Information for Veterans Concerning Health Care Options" on their website containing the contact information for all veterans' integrated service networks located within the state and the VA medical centers and clinics.

While a number of our legislative goals were achieved this past session, much more remains to be done. In 2017, 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 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,

Michael DenDekker
Member of Assembly

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

Honorable Michael DenDekker
Chair

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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. The Committee was represented at the ground breaking ceremony of the Gold Star Family Memorial to be located in Lafayette Park across from the New York State Capitol Building and at several events statewide to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War.

This past legislative session, the Committee held five committee meetings at which it considered 110 bills. Nine passed both houses of the Legislature; nine were signed into law by the Governor.

While the Standing Committee on Veterans' Affairs 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 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 must work closely with other committees to ensure that this unique population's needs are met.

II. 2016 LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

A. Real Property Tax Exemptions

The veterans' real property tax exemption has a long history in New York State. Veterans' tax exemptions are available to men and women who have served in the armed forces of this country since 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 Law Section 458); the percentage-of-exemption value "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).

Chapter 518 of the Laws of 2013 expanded the exemption to include school taxes currently available under the alternative veterans exemption and if the school board adopts a local law to offer the exemption.

1. Expansion of the Cold War Veterans Exemption (A.3379-A Cusick; Chapter 253 of the Laws of 2016)

This law would expand the Cold War Veterans' Exemption to taxes levied by local school districts. It would allow those districts to conduct a public hearing regarding the tax exemption and, after the 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 receive from their local tax districts.

2. New York City Council Include Veterans Exemption (A. 9688 Cusick; Chapter 332 of the Laws of 2016)

This bill would allow the local legislative body of a city with a population of one million or more, after holding public hearings, to adopt a local law to grant veterans an exemption from their school taxes. This law was needed since the City of New York does not have a school board and there was no mechanism to grant the exemption to veterans residing in the five boroughs.

3. Real Property Tax Exemption for Certain Veterans (A. 6140-A Lavine; Chapter 476 of the Laws of 2016)

Veterans who served on active duty under Executive Order 11519 and as reserves of the United States Armed Forces would be allowed to apply for the alternative veterans' real

property tax exemption, if the municipality in which their primary residence is located adopts a local law to granting such exemption.

On March 23, 1970, the President of the United States declared a state of national emergency and directed the Secretary of Defense to call reserves of the armed forces to active duty to assist the Postmaster General in restoring and maintaining the postal service. Under Executive Order 11519, 35 Federal Register 5003 (1970), the call-up, designated as Operation Graphic Hand, included members and units of the New York Army National Guard and the New York Air National Guard.

B. Information for Veterans

Benefits for veterans are not automatically granted. Each benefit must be applied for by the veteran or 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. Health Care Options Information for Veterans (A.7967-B DenDekker; Chapter 64 of the Laws of 2016)

The Division of Veterans' Affairs is required to maintain an annually updated fact sheet entitled "Information for Veterans Concerning Health Care Options" on their webpage. This page must contain the contact information for all veterans' integrated service networks located within New York State and for the U.S. Veterans Health Administration, including VA medical centers and clinics. The measure also requires hospitals to provide patients with the fact sheets.

2. Free Mobile App for Veterans (A.10258 Blake; Chapter 358 of the Laws of 2016)

In February of 2016, Governor Cuomo announced a free mobile application to help veterans and their families obtain state veterans benefits. This law requires the Division of Veterans' Affairs to establish, operate and maintain a free mobile app, therefore placing into statute the requirement to provide such application device.

3. Inquiring Into Past Military Service On Applications for Public Welfare (A. 8641-B Hevesi; Chapter 407 of the Laws of 2016)

The purpose of this measure is to direct the local social services districts and not-for-profit corporations to ask their clients on their applications by check-off if they or a family member served in the United States military. This information would then be forwarded to the Division of Veterans' Affairs.

C. Miscellaneous

Burial of Indigent Veterans (A.9169 DenDekker; Chapter 29 of the Laws of 2016)

This statute enacts a chapter amendment to Chapter 579 of the Laws of 2015 to require the county and city of New York to promote the diversity of congressionally-chartered veterans organizations selected to engage the services of a funeral firm to conduct the federal and burial services of indigent veterans. This measure would also allow such organizations to refuse, if it is financially unable to front the cost prior to reimbursement.

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 2016-17 budget appropriated \$5,779,000 for services and expenses related to the Veterans Counseling Program in the State Operations Fund and \$3,542,000 from the General and Special Revenue Funds for services in Aid to Localities funds.

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 2016-17 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 2016-17 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 2016-17 budget included \$40,000 to the Vietnam Veterans of America 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 family members have been assisted.

The SFY 2016-17 budget included \$100,000 to the Veterans Justice Project. 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 2016-17 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, legal representation will enable LGBT veterans currently on public assistance, Medicaid, and 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 2016-17 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 2016-17 budget included \$200,000 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 2016-17, \$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 City's construction industry commitment to this program 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 State wide basis.

In the SFY 2016-17 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 2016-17 adopted budget \$25,000 was appropriated for this program.

1. 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 2016-17 budget appropriated \$1,966,000 for the expenses associated with the operation of this program in State Operation funding.

2. 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 2016-17 budget appropriated \$480,000 under State Operations funding and \$999,000 under Aid To Localities funding for these purposes.

a. 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 2016-17 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.

b. 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 2016-17 budget sub-allocated \$599,000 to the payment of the Gold Star Parent annuities.

B. Division of Military and Naval Affairs

1. Recruitment Incentive and Retention Program

Chapter 268 of the Laws of 1996 established the Recruitment Incentive and Retention Program to provide eligible members of the New York Army National Guard, the New York Air National Guard, and the New York Naval Militia with a tuition benefit for undergraduate study.

In the budget for SFY 2016-17, \$3,300,000 was appropriated for expenses already accrued or to be accrued under this program

2. 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 2016-17, \$241,000 was included for operating expenses associated with the New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center for nonpersonal 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 and, Veterans Research Center; and the preservation and restoration of historic artifacts.

**C. New York State Higher Education Services Corporation
Various Veterans and Military-Related Tuition Awards Program**

In the SFY 206-17 budget, \$74,908,000 was appropriated to cover the entire cost associated with the State's many scholarship programs, including the veterans' and military-related programs.

**D. 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 2016-17 budget, \$2,780,000 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.

**E. 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 2016-17 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.

F. 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 could be encouraged to try agriculture. In turn, their veterans would be available to train additional veteran-farmers in future years.

The SFY 2016-17 budget included \$115,000 for the Cornell Small Farms Program.

IV. BILLS THAT PASSED THE ASSEMBLY ONLY

A. Veterans' Affairs Committee

1. Services Available to Veterans (A.5514 Cusick; Passed Assembly)

This bill would require all subdivisions of the State to inquire, when dealing with a client or customer, whether he or she or a family member is a veteran and then to inform veterans and their families 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. Interagency Council (A.4789-A 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.

3. Military Sexual Trauma (A.7260-A Russell; Passed Assembly)

This bill would require the Division of Veterans' Affairs to develop plans and benefits to assist veterans who have suffered Military Sexual Trauma while on active duty or during military training. It would require the county and city veterans' service agencies provide information on programs to assist this special veteran population.

4. Information on Mental Health Assistance (A.1945 Fahy; Passed Assembly)

This bill would require information on where veterans can seek help for military sexual trauma to be posted on the websites of the Division of Veterans' Affairs and the Office of Mental Health.

5. Peer-to-Peer Counseling for Veterans (A.6114 Ortiz; Passed Assembly)

This bill would create a peer-to-peer counselor program for veterans who are suffering from mental illness, alcohol abuse, and chemical dependence.

6. Information on Special Veterans Populations
(A.2357-A Lavine; Passed Assembly)

This bill would require information regarding specific mental and physical health issues including: post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, 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.

B. Election Law Committee

Military Ballots
(A.9108 Cusick; Passed Assembly)

This bill would ensure that New York State's election law complies with the federal Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act.

C. Ways and Means Committee

Congressional Charter Veterans Service Organizations Fund Check-Off
(A. 763-B Miller; Passed Assembly)

This measure would establish the congressional chartered veterans' service organizations fund to authorize gifts via the state income tax check-off. Monies in the fund would be used to support the congressionally chartered veterans service organizations that help veterans in gaining access to benefits on various levels of government.

V. BILLS REPORTED BY OTHER COMMITTEES THAT BECAME LAW

A. Consumer Affairs and Protection Committee Termination Without Penalty of Certain Service Contracts Chapter 164 of the Laws of 2016; A.7717-A; DenDekker

Allows active duty service members under certain conditions to cancel contracts without penalty with telecommunications service providers, internet service providers, health clubs, health spas, or television service providers.

B. Governmental Operations Committee World War I Temporary Commission Chapter 486 of the Laws of 2016; A.9524; DenDekker

Creates a temporary New York State World War I 100th Anniversary commemoration commission to make recommendations on how to commemorate the centennial of World War I in the State of New York.

C. Higher Education Committee Military Spouses Chapter 299 of the Laws of 2016; A.4394-A; Ortiz

This measure provides for expedited licensing of military spouses with out-of-state professional licenses in equivalent occupations. This statute only applies to professions which are licensed through the Department of Education.

D. Mental Health Committee Eligibility for Dependents of Military Service Members Disability Services Chapter 488 of the Laws of 2016; A.10461-A; Englebright

This measure will allow for a dependent of a military service member who is a legal resident of the state and who has been previously determined to be eligible for developmental disability services to retain eligibility for those services as long as they remain a legal resident of the state. This bill also allows a dependent who resides out-of-state to be placed on the waiting list for services if they left the state due to the military service member's military assignment.

E. Governmental Employees Committee

1. Veterans Military Buyback Chapter 41 of the Laws of 2016; A.9531; Paulin

This law will extend the Military Service Credit Law of 2000 to all veterans who have served honorably in the United States armed forces and who are members of the various state and local retirement systems. An appropriation of \$24,800,000 was included in the legislation.

F. Ways and Means Committee

1. Tax Gifts for State Veterans' Homes Chapter 432 of the Laws of 2016; A.9315-A; Miller

This measure establishes business franchise and personal income tax gifts for the support of state veterans' homes. It also establishes the "veterans' home assistance fund" as a repository of revenue for such gifts, grants and bequests and requires annual state appropriations to be used in support of the five veterans homes in the State of New York.

VI. HONORING VETERANS THROUGH LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTIONS

A. Commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the United Services Organizations (Resolution No. 934, DenDekker)

In 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt sought to unite several service organizations into one organization to lift the morale of our military and support on the home front. The entities: the Salvation Army, Young Men's Christian Association, Young Women's Christian Association, National Catholic Community Services, and the National Travelers Aid Association became the United Service Organizations (USO). Today, the USO has continued to support our nation's military and their families for over seven decades as they defend our country and our freedom. This resolution commemorates the USO on their 75th Anniversary.

B. Commemorating June 14, 2016, as Flag Day (Resolution No. 1443; Solages)

The American Flag, symbol of the United States for 240 years, has undergone many changes over its history. The current 50-star version was raised for the first time officially at 12:01 a.m., July 4, 1960, at Fort McHenry National Monument, heralding the admission of our 50th state, Hawaii. Flag Day was first celebrated in 1877, the centennial of the U.S. Flag. It was officially established by a proclamation of President Woodrow Wilson on May 30, 1916. On August 3, 1949, President Harry S Truman signed an Act of Congress designating June 14th of each year as Flag Day. This resolution commemorates Flag Day, June 14, 2016.

VII. HONORING SERVICEMEN AND SERVICEWOMEN THROUGH LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTIONS

A. Commending Lieutenant Colonel Anne Maker Upon the Occasion of Her Retirement After More Than 40 Years of Dedicated Service to the New York Air National Guard (Resolution No. 1337; Thiele)

Anne Maker served as a member of the Medical Service Corps in the United States Air Force where she was deployed to Bosnia, Qatar, and Afghanistan. After active duty, Lieutenant Colonel Marker worked at the 106th Rescue Wing, New York Air National Guard in Westhampton Beach, New York. She officially retired on April 27, 2016. This resolution commends Lieutenant Colonel upon the occasion of her retirement after more than 40 years of dedicated service to the New York Air National Guard.

B. Commending Chief Master Sergeant John Francis Ditro Upon His Retirement After 27 Years of Faithful Military Service to the New York Air National Guard (Resolution No. 871; Hunter)

In 1995, seven years after being honorably discharged in March of 1988 from the United States Navy, John Ditro returned to military life taking a position in the New York Air National Guard. He was a Command and Control Battle Management Operations Specialist at the Northeast Air Defense Sector. In 2002, Chief Master Sergeant Ditro transferred to the 174th Fighter Wing, New York Air National Guard, where he worked as an accounting technician and five years later was recognized as the Senior NCO of the year. This resolution commends Chief Master Sergeant Ditro upon his retirement after 27 years of faithful military service to the New York Air National Guard and to wish him continued success in all his future endeavors.

VIII. MEMORIALIZING THE GOVERNOR TO PROCLAIM VETERAN-RELATED EVENTS

A. Memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to Proclaim April 30, 2014, as West Point Day in the State of New York (Resolution No. 1108, Skoufis)

By an act of Congress, on March 16, 1802, the United States Military Academy was established within the borders of New York State, on the banks of the Hudson River. Sixty-two years ago, the late James T. McNamara, then a member of the New York State Assembly, and a member of the Academy's Class of 1939, was the author of the State legislature's first "West Point Day" Resolution. This resolution memorializes Governor Cuomo to proclaim May 5, 2016, as West Point Day in the State of New York.

B. Memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to Proclaim April 11, 2016, as Submarine Day in the State of New York, in Conjunction With the Observance of National Submarine Day (Resolution No. 1128, Tedisco)

Each year, the American submarine community celebrates National Submarine Day on the anniversary of the United States government's acquisition of its first modern commissioned submarine, the USS Holland, on April 11, 1900. The New York State Submariners Memorial is located in the Village of Ballston Spa, the first Memorial dedicated to the submariners from a state rather than the submarine they served on. Throughout the past 116 years, America's submarines have played a vital part in wars in our Nation's freedom and history. This resolution memorializes Governor Cuomo to proclaim April 11, 2016, as Submarine Day in the State of New York.

C. Memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to Proclaim June 15, 2016, as Special Operations Forces Day in the State of New York, and Commending Those Military Men From the State of New York Who Serve Our Nation as Team Members of the Special Operations Forces (Resolution No. 1554, Rules at the Request of DenDekker)

Joint Special Operations Command (J.S.O.C.) Special Operations Forces include the Army Green Berets, Army Night Stalkers, Army Rangers, Navy SEALs, Marine MARSOL, MARINE Force RECON, and Air Force Special Tactics. Special Operations teams defend the United States and its interests by conducting synchronized planning of global operations against the enemy. Each special operations team is unique and each team member has a specialty that is needed to accomplish the goal which is always to defend the United States and its interests. This resolution honors those members from the State of New York who served in the Joint Special Operations Command.

D. Memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to Proclaim June 27, 2016, as Post-Traumatic Stress Injury Awareness Day in the State of New York (Resolution No. 1493, Rules at the Request of DenDekker)

The diagnosis now known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder was first defined to commonly and more accurately understand and treat veterans who had endured severe traumatic combat stress. Referring to the complications from post-traumatic stress as a disorder perpetuates the stigma of and bias against mental illness and the stigma discourages those suffering from post-traumatic stress from seeking proper and timely medical treatment. Making the condition less stigmatizing and more honorable can favorably influence those affected and encourage them to seek help without fear of retribution or shame. This resolution memorializes Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim Monday, June 27, 2016, as Post-Traumatic Stress Injury Awareness Day in the State of New York. The resolution further urges the Department of Health, the Department of Mental Health, the Division of Military and Naval Affairs and the Division of Veterans' Affairs to continue to work to educate the victims of abuse, crime and natural disasters, service members, veterans and their families, the general public, about the causes, symptoms, and treatment of post-traumatic stress injury.

E. Memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo To Proclaim November 4-10, 2016, the Week Prior to Our National Veteran's Day, Held Yearly on November 11th, as Veterans Awareness Week in New York State (Resolution No. 1560, Rules at the request of Jean-Pierre)

November 11th is a national holiday set aside for Americans to pay homage to the veterans of our military service. The true meaning of our Veteran's Day may not receive enough attention on a one-day holiday. It is felt that an official weeklong period is needed in which schools, veterans' organizations, and the general public could more broadly focus on and show appreciation of the veterans that are still living. This resolution memorializes the Governor to proclaim November 4-10, 2016, the week prior to our national Veteran's Day, held yearly on November 11th, as Veterans Awareness Week in New York State.

F. Memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo To Proclaim New York State as a Purple Heart State (Resolution No. 1280, DenDekker)

Today, the Purple Heart Medal is the oldest military decoration in the world, and is awarded in the name of the President of the United States to members of the United States military who have been wounded or killed in action. The Department of Defense announced a standard which allows for a clearer way to evaluate a wounded individual for a Purple Heart resulting from a "non-penetrating wound". The Department also proclaimed that eligibility would be extended to those wounded or killed by certain kinds of domestic terrorist activities. New York has honored those who have earned the Purple Heart medal in several ways: The New York State Purple Heart Memorial is located in Albany, New York, and the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor is located in New

Windsor, New York. Route 5 from Albany to Syracuse is named as a Purple Heart Highway. This resolution memorializes Governor Cuomo to proclaim New York State as a Purple Heart State.

IX. OTHER ACTIVITIES OF THE VETERANS COMMITTEE

A. Subcommittee on Women Veterans

The Subcommittee on Women Veterans sponsored the 23th annual Women Veterans Recognition Day, held on June 8, 2016. This year the Subcommittee honored the women veterans who served our country by hosting a luncheon to discuss issues that impact female members of the military. Those who attended reflected on their time spent in the military, their experiences as women in the United States Armed Forces, problems they have encountered since their time in military service, and how the State can more effectively communicate with women veterans to provide answers to their questions and concerns.

The Assembly adopted a resolution and two pieces of legislation during this special event in the Assembly Chamber.

1. Assembly Resolution No. 1481 by Assemblywoman Addie Russell, the Chair of the Subcommittee on Women Veterans, was adopted memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim June 12, 2016, as Women Veterans Recognition Day in the State of New York.

2. Military Sexual Trauma
(A.7260-A Russell; Passed Assembly)

This bill would require the Division of Veterans' Affairs to develop plans and benefits to assist veterans who have suffered Military Sexual Trauma while on active duty or during military training. It would require the county and city veterans' service agencies to provide information on programs to assist this special population.

3. Information on Mental Health Assistance
(A.1945 Fahy; Passed Assembly)

This bill would require that information on where veterans can seek help for military sexual trauma be posted on the websites of the Division of Veterans' Affairs and the Office of Mental Health.

B. Public Hearing and Roundtable

In January 2016, the New York State Assembly Standing Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Subcommittee on Women Veterans held a public hearing in Albany, New York to review women veterans issues and single parent veterans that were funded in the SFY 2016-17 budget. The Division of Veterans' Affairs and several organizations that have programs dedicated to veterans gave testimony before the committees.

Assembly Chamber Veterans Related Events

1. Special Introductions

- A.** On Tuesday, March 29, 2016, the New York State Assembly Veterans' Affairs Committee hosted in the Assembly Chamber a special program dedicated to honoring, remembering, and thanking those who served in the Vietnam War. Among the honorees were John Ronan, a New Yorker from Queens and the National President of the Vietnam Veterans of America; Ned Foote, the State President of the Vietnam Veterans of America New York State Council; and Joseph Pollicino, the President of the Tri-County Council Vietnam Era Veterans. Wayne P. Jackson, Sergeant-of-Arms for the New York State Assembly and a Vietnam Veteran, was awarded the Vietnam Veterans of America Achievement Medal for service in-country and community service he has done since his discharge from the military.

Also, on March 29, 2016, the New York State Assembly adopted Resolution 1126, introduced by Assemblymember DenDekker, to memorialize Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim Tuesday, March 29, 2016, as Vietnam Veterans Day in the State of New York. The resolution pays 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.

B. Tuskegee Airmen

On Thursday, June 16, 2016, several members of the Claude B. Govan Chapter of the Tuskegee Airman, Inc. were honored in the New York State Assembly Chamber. The four veterans were from Harlem, Glen Cove and Brooklyn, New York. The Tuskegee Airmen, also known as the Red Tails, were established during World War II. These individuals were the first group of African American military pilots to serve with distinction in war. They were awarded 14 Bronze Stars, 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses and 744 Air Medals as well as several Silver Stars. The Tuskegee Airmen also received the Distinguished Unit Citation for a mission flown in Germany responsible for bombing the Daimler-Benz factory in Berlin. These men were also responsible for destroying numerous trucks, trains and fuel dumps, flying over 1,500 missions by the end of World War II. They were also were powerful in making strides to fight racism in America.

Also on June 16, 2016, the New York State Assembly adopted Resolution 1588, introduced by Assemblymember Blake, commending the Tuskegee Airmen upon their 75th Anniversary and dedication to the United States Army in times of peace and war.

X. OUTLOOK FOR 2017

The Standing Committee on Veterans' Affairs is looking forward to a productive year in 2017. 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	14	0	14
To Codes	1	0	1
To Rules	1	0	1
To Judiciary	0	0	0
Total	19	0	19
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	0	1	1
Recalled	0	3	3
Total	0	4	4
Bills Defeated in Committee	0	0	0
Bills Held for Consideration With a Roll-Call Vote	16	0	16
Bills Never Reported, Died in Committee	51	19	70
Bills Having Enacting Clauses Stricken	2	0	2
Motions to Discharge Lost	0	0	0
Total Bills in Committee	87	23	110
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.3379-A	Cusick	253	This measure would expand the Cold War Veterans' Exemption so that it would apply to taxes levied by local school districts if the school district elected to do so.
A.8699	Hunter	75	This measure extends to June 15, 2018, the deadline for filing suits against the producers of Agent Orange. Those persons whose injury or death was caused by contact with or exposure to phenoxy herbicides and who served as members of the U.S. Armed Forces in Indo-China from December 22, 1961, through May 7, 1975, qualify for the extended time.
A.9168	Thiele	22	This chapter amendment is technical to ensure that the original Chapter accomplishes its intended goal of creating a real property tax exemption, at local option, to veterans eligible for the alternative veterans' exemption.
A.9169	DenDekker	29	This chapter amendment to Chapter 579 of the Laws of 2015 to require the county or city of New York to promote the diversity of congressionally chartered veterans organizations selected to engage the services of a funeral firm to conduct the funeral and burial services of indigent veterans and to allow such organizations to refuse, if it is financially unable to do so

			prior to reimbursement.
A.7967-B	DenDekker	64	This measure requires the Division of Veterans' Affairs to maintain an annually updated fact sheet entitled "Information Concerning Health Care Options" on their webpage containing contact information for all veterans integrated service networks located within the state and for all the U.S. Veterans Health Administration, including VA medical centers and clinics. It would also require hospitals to provide veterans patients with said fact sheets.
A.10258	Blake	358	This law requires the Division of Veterans' Affairs to establish, operate and maintain a free mobile application.
A.9688	Cusick	332	This measure would allow the local legislative body of a city with a population of one million or more, after holding a public hearing, to adopt a local law to grant eligible veterans an exemption from their school taxes.
A.6140-A	Lavine	476	This bill would allow a municipality to adopt a local law to exempt a veteran who served on active duty under Executive Order 11519 as a reservist to be eligible for the alternative veterans' exemption.

APPENDIX C

BILLS THAT PASSED THE ASSEMBLY ONLY

BILL NO.	SPONSOR	DESCRIPTION
A.5514	Cusick	Would inform veterans and their families of the many services and opportunities provided by the Division of Veteran's Affairs.
A.4789-A	Ramos	Would establish a New York State Interagency coordinating council for service-disabled veterans to provide accessible, coordinated, and specialized services from multiple state and local agencies to disabled veterans.
A.1945	Fahy	Would require information on where veterans can seek help for those who have experienced military sexual trauma while on active duty or during military training on the websites of the Division of Veterans' Affairs and the Office of Mental Health.
A.6114	Ortiz	Would create a peer to peer counselor program for veterans who are suffering from mental illness, alcohol abuse, and chemical dependence.
A.7260-A	Russell	Would require the Division of Veterans' Affairs to develop programs to address military sexual trauma and also would require the county and city veterans' service agencies to provide information on matters pertaining to military sexual trauma.
A.2357-A	Lavine	Would require information regarding specific mental and physical health issues to be included on the New York State Department of Health's website through the Veterans' Health Care Information Program. The measure would require the Department of Corrections and Community Services to collect the military background and circumstances of persons subject to

		their jurisdiction.
A.2368-A	Rules at the request of Barrett	Would require the Division of Veterans' Affairs, in consultation with the Department of Taxation and Finance, pursuant to its training responsibilities, within thirty days of this act and at least annually, to reinforce and/or remind assessors of the fact 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.