

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



CARL E. HEASTIE, SPEAKER
DIDI BARRETT, CHAIR

NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY
COMMITTEE ON
VETERANS' AFFAIRS



Didi Barrett

Assemblymember 106th District
Columbia County
Dutchess County

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

CHAIR
Veterans' Affairs
Legislative Women's Caucus

COMMITTEES
Agriculture
Environmental Conservation
Mental Health
Tourism, Parks, Arts and
Sports Development

December 15, 2021

Hon. 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 2021 Annual Report of the New York State Assembly Standing Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Several significant pieces of legislation became law this year, most prominently legislation to increase the information available about veteran suicides (Chapter 657) and creation of a Veterans' Employment Task Force to examine the unique employment challenges facing veterans. The Committee also held a hearing to review the purpose and structure of DVS, including the possibility of elevating the Division to a Department, to ensure the best possible services are available to New York's veterans.

While I'm proud of the work we completed in 2021, much more remains. In the coming year, the Committee will focus on how to best connect veterans to services - including county-level services, mental and behavioral health options and New York's outdoor resources. The Committee also will continue to examine issues related to older veterans, women veterans and employment issues related to 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,

Didi Barrett
Member of Assembly
Chair, Committee on Veterans' Affairs

2021 ANNUAL REPORT
NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY
STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Honorable Didi Barrett, Chair

Committee Members

MAJORITY

Catherine T. Nolan
Michael J. Cusick
Angelo Santabarbara
Pamela J. Hunter
Stacey Pheffer Amato
Monica P. Wallace
Steve Stern
Billy Jones
Marianne Buttenschon
Brian Barnwell
Jenifer Rajkumar
Amanda N. Septimo
Chris Burdick

MINORITY

Jacob Ashby, Ranker
Stephen M. Hawley
David G. McDonough
Angelo J. Morinello
Brian D. Manktelow

STAFF

Joanne B. Martin, Principal Analyst
Michelle Milot, Assistant Secretary for Program and Policy
Vanessa Komarnicki, Committee Clerk

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	COMMITTEE JURISDICTION AND SUMMARY	3
II.	2021 LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS	4
III.	BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS	9
IV.	VETERAN-RELATED BILLS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES THAT BECAME LAW	19
V.	HONORING VETERANS THROUGH LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTIONS	22
VI.	HONORING SERVICE MEMBERS THROUGH LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTIONS	25
VII.	MEMORIALIZING THE GOVERNOR TO PROCLAIM VETERAN-RELATED EVENTS	26
VIII.	OTHER ACTIVITIES BY THE VETERANS' COMMITTEE.....	29
	A. Hearings and Roundtables	
	B. Subcommittee on Women Veterans	
IX.	OUTLOOK FOR 2022	30
	APPENDIX A.....	31
	APPENDIX B	32
	APPENDIX C.....	33

I. COMMITTEE JURISDICTION AND SUMMARY

The Assembly Standing Committee on Veterans' Affairs evaluates legislation affecting approximately 750,000 New York State residents who unselfishly served their nation in the United States armed forces, including 58,855 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 three Committee meetings at which it considered 14 bills. Nine bills passed both houses of the Legislature and were all signed into law by the Governor.

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 veterans' initiatives 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 Chair, members, and staff work closely with other committees to ensure that this unique population's needs are met.

II. 2021 LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

A. State Veterans' Cemetery

Prior to the end of 2022 there will be six open national veterans' cemeteries located in Bath, Elmira, Schuylerville, Calverton, Farmingdale, and Pembroke. The Cypress Hills National Cemetery (Brooklyn) is closed to new internments. However, despite the presence of these national veterans' cemeteries, New York does not yet have a State veterans' cemetery.

The U.S. Veterans Administration (VA) State Cemetery Grants Program was established in 1978 to complement the VA's network of national cemeteries. The Program assists states in providing gravesites in those areas where the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) cannot fully satisfy veterans' burial needs. Public Law 105-368, which went into effect in 1999, authorized the VA to reimburse up to 100 percent of the development costs of an approved state veterans' cemetery project. The VA can now also provide reimbursement for equipment and construction; however, land acquisition, operation and maintenance are solely the responsibility of the state.

Establishing a State Veterans' Cemetery (A.1920 Barrett; Chapter 41 of the Laws of 2021)

This law, which is intended to facilitate the development of a State Veterans' Cemetery, requires the Division of Veterans' Services (DVS) to issue a public request for information to solicit interest from municipalities that would like to have a State-operated veterans cemetery in their jurisdiction; establish a nine-member selection committee to evaluate the resulting municipal responses; require the DVS Director, the Commissioner of the Office of General Services, and the Chair of the Division of Cemeteries to determine the amount of money necessary to fund the non-reimbursable costs of such a cemetery; and, require the Director of the Division of the Budget and the State Comptroller to certify that sufficient funds are available for such costs prior to the submission of an application for federal funding.

B. Discharge Papers

One of the most important items that soldiers receive at the end of a military deployment or when ending military service, is the DD 214 Form, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty. This document is issued by the United States Department of Defense (USDOD) upon a military service member's retirement, separation, or discharge from active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States, e.g., Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, or Coast Guard.

The DD 214 Form is used by various governmental agencies on the federal, state, and local levels. The form represents the complete, verified record of a service member's time in the military (both Active and Reserve), awards and medals, and other pertinent service information, including, but not limited to, highest rate and pay grade held on active duty, total combat service and/or overseas service, Military Occupational Specialty (MOS), Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC) or Navy officer designator, and a record of training and schools completed. The document also contains codes, known as Separation Designator/Separation Justification Codes and Reenlistment

Eligibility Codes, used by the Armed Forces to describe the service member's reason for discharge, and in the case of enlisted personnel, their re-enlistment eligibility. In addition, the type of military discharge is also listed on the Form and includes: Honorable Discharge; General Discharge; Other Than Honorable Conditions Discharge; Bad Conduct Discharge, Dishonorable Discharge; Officer Discharge and Entry Level Separation.

**“Bad Papers” Technical Amendment
(A.2014 Barrett; Chapter 111 of the Laws of 2021)**

Many veterans received less than honorable discharges as a result of a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Military Sexual Trauma (MST), or as a result of sexual orientation, gender or expression, including pursuant to the federal “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell Policy.” These discharges were determined at the federal level and cannot be revised by the State; however, a number of State benefits require an honorable discharge. In 2019, legislation was enacted into law to remedy that problem and help ensure that veterans with “qualifying conditions,” including PTSD, TBI, MST, and “discharged LGBT veterans” are eligible to receive benefits. However, that law limited the entities able to certify eligibility. This law will expand such entities to include any individual licensed to provide health care in New York State.

**Information Available to Local Veterans’ Service Agencies
(A.1782 Jean-Pierre; Passed Assembly)**

This legislation would require DVS to forward a copy of a veteran’s DD 214 Form to the appropriate local veterans’ service agency within sixty days of receipt. Also, this legislation would authorize a representative of a funeral firm assisting with the burial of a veteran to obtain a copy of an honorable discharge certificate that has been filed at the county clerk’s office. Lastly, the bill would make a DD 214 Form available for public inspection and copying in accordance with the archival schedule adopted by the National Archives.

C. Veterans Suicide Prevention

According to the 2019 National Veterans Suicide Prevention Report, the number of veteran suicides has exceeded 6,000 each year from 2008 to 2017. The report used governmental data, secondary literature, and interviews to document what they refer to as a “suicide epidemic.” In addition, a study conducted by Brown University’s Cost of War Project, which was released in June 2021, stated that the number of deaths by suicide has surpassed the number of combat deaths.

**Reporting Veterans Suicides
(A.3237-A Hunter; Chapter 657 of the Laws of 2021)**

The purpose of this law is to compile more data regarding veteran suicides in order to create better prevention methods and strategies. The law directs the coroner, coroner's physician or medical examiner to report on a standard form any death of a veteran that appears to be a suicide. The form would be required, at a minimum to ensure compliance with the strictest privacy protections and encourage data aggregation to the extent possible. Completed forms would be forwarded to the Office of Mental Hygiene (OMH). The DVS, in consultation with the Department of Health (DOH) and OMH will submit a report containing the following information to the extent possible: the number of veterans who died by suicide; trends of veteran suicide rates over the past five years, including details by period of military service, and a comparison of veterans' suicides rates by county, statewide, and nationwide. This report will be due to the Governor and the Legislature no later than June 30, 2024, and every three years thereafter.

**Veterans' Suicide Prevention Temporary Task Force
(A.5836-A Cusick; Chapter 770 of the Laws of 2021)**

This law establishes the Veterans' Suicide Prevention Temporary Task Force. All appointees must have expertise in fields or disciplines related to mental health and at least three shall have worked with members of the military or veterans' community. The focus would include determining causes of veterans' suicides and recommendations regarding prevention.

D. Employment

According to the United States Department of Labor, unemployment rates for both male and female veterans increased in 2020, most likely as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This increase is in addition to the fact that the rate for veterans traditionally has been higher than the rest of the population.

**Veterans Employment Task Force
(A.7472 Stern; Chapter 607 of the Laws of 2021)**

This law will establish a Veterans Employment Task Force to hold public hearings at least twice a year, in different regions of the State, in order to examine and receive information on the employment status of veterans. On June 30, 2023, and every two years thereafter, the Task Force will be required to submit a report to the Governor and Legislature that includes, but is not limited to, analyses of current resources and programs being used to assist veterans in finding employment and a list of recommendations on how to maximize and create new opportunities for veterans seeking to maintain or obtain employment.

E. Women Veterans

Women veterans are the largest growing subgroup of veterans in the State, accounting for approximately eight percent of the total number of veterans.

Women Veterans Advisory Committee (A.1140-A Wallace; Chapter 600 of the Laws of 2021)

This law establishes a Women Veterans Advisory Committee to make information available to women veterans regarding issues including but not limited to, job and career opportunities and benefits and programs available to women veterans. This Committee will support and assist the Division of Veterans' Services, and the Women Veterans Coordinator at DVS will serve as a liaison with the Advisory Committee.

F. Veterans Status Requests

“Have You Served in the Military?” (A.6100-A Cusick; Chapter 609 of the Laws of 2021)

It is estimated that only 17 percent of the overall veterans' population is accessing their earned benefits. This law will require DVS in cooperation with the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) and any other entity DVS deems necessary, to require all intake forms at any homeless shelter to ask their applicants “Have you ever served in the military?” The law also requires nursing homes, residential health care facilities and assisted living residences to ask the same question. If the applicant's answer is yes, such veteran would receive information regarding the scope of DVS's services.

G. Definition of Veteran

Vietnam Era Beginning Date (A.7388-B Barrett; Chapter 606 of the Laws of 2021)

This law makes conforming changes to State law to reflect changes at the Federal level relating to the timing of the Vietnam Era. Prior to the recent change, the federal government recognized service in the Republic of Vietnam between February 28, 1961, and April 30, 1975, as wartime era service. Recognizing the significant American military presence in the Republic of Vietnam before February 28, 1961, Public Law 116-515 uses the date recognized by the Pentagon's U.S. Vietnam War Commemoration project, November 1, 1955. November 1, 1955, represents the date when the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) which was considered to be technical staff attached to the US diplomatic mission, was sent to Vietnam.

**Recognition of America’s Newest Military Branch Space Force
(A.7606 Barrett; Passed Assembly)**

This bill amends various sections of law to revise the term “veteran” to include members of the Space Force and clarify the meaning of veteran under Section 360 of the Executive Law. The U.S. Space Force (USSF) established within the Air Forces, was established on December 20, 2019, with the enactment of the Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act. A four-star general known as the Chief of Space Operations (CSO) serves as the senior military member of the USSF and is a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

**Inclusion of Commissioned Corps in the Definition of Veteran
(A.7605 Barrett; Passed Assembly)**

Under federal law, those who served in the commissioned corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the United States Public Health Services (USPHS) are eligible for various veterans benefits similar to those who served in the United States armed forces. Although NOAA and USPHS are part of the military, some provisions of the State law that define military and veteran benefits do not include NOAA, or USPHS. This legislation amends the statutes that are not currently included.

H. Additional Legislation

**Increased Information on Certain Medical Conditions
(A.2203 Barrett; Chapter 443 of the Laws of 2021)**

This law requires DVS to provide information on the Division’s website concerning Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

**Alex R. Jimenez New York State Military Immigrant Family Legacy Program
(A.4660-A Cruz; Passed Assembly)**

This bill would help to facilitate immigration assistance for veterans and their family members. DVS and the Division of Military and Naval Affairs (DMNA) in conjunction, with the Office for New Americans, would be required to develop and implement a program to assist recipients, defined as uniformed service members, veterans, reserve component members and their family members, to secure legal immigration status in the United States.

III. BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

A. New York State Division of Veterans' Services

The DVS assists, counsels, and advocates for veterans, military personnel, and their families.

The enacted State Budget contains an All Funds appropriation of \$23.75 million, an increase of \$4.2 million from the Executive Budget.

Veterans' Benefits Advising Program

The Veterans' Benefits Advising Program, formerly known as the Counseling Services Program, provides counseling and services through a statewide network of State veteran counselors. The counselors, all of whom are veterans, 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. State veteran counselors receive professional training in veterans' benefits counseling and are accredited by the USDVA. The State Budget for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2021-22 included an appropriation of \$13,863,000, which is a \$3,061,000 increase from the prior fiscal year, due to increased spending by the Legislature.

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 2021-22 included an appropriation of \$1,380,000 for County and City Veterans' Service Agencies.

Monroe County Veterans' Outreach Center, Inc.

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 program through the Rochester veterans' court. The State Budget for SFY 2021-22 included an appropriation of \$250,000 for the services and expenses related to the Veterans' Outreach Center, Inc.

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 elderly LGBT veterans that provides legal counsel, benefits advocacy, and enhanced wraparound services in order to improve 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 provides assistance to LGBT veterans, including helping them to navigate the process of upgrading their discharge if it is necessary for them to access federal VA benefits. The State Budget for SFY 2021-22 included an appropriation of \$260,000 for services and expenses for elderly LGBT veterans. This was a legislative addition to the proposed Executive Budget.

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. The goal of the Project is to provide free legal advice and direct representation to veterans in civil (non-criminal) legal matters. The Project covers more than 120,000 veterans living in Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster, and Westchester counties. The State Budget for SFY 2021-22 included an appropriation of \$380,000 for this program. This was a legislative addition to the proposed Executive Budget.

New York State Defenders Association Veterans Defense Program

The Veterans Defense Program (VDP) helps the most vulnerable veterans by assisting defense attorneys to provide 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 provides training and expert legal assistance to attorneys in 120 county-based public defenders offices, legal aid agencies, and assigned counsel staff. The State Budget for SFY 2021-22 included an appropriation of \$500,000 for this Program, and an additional \$220,000 for an expansion to include Long Island. This was a legislative addition to the proposed Executive Budget.

Helmets to Hardhats Program

Helmets to Hardhats is a charitable corporation that assists transitioning active duty military service members, veterans, Reserves or National Guard members, in gaining employment with the building trades. The Helmets to Hardhats Program has been actively placing military veterans in building-trades affiliated apprenticeship programs across the country since 2003 and since 2013 in the City of New York. The program has since been expanded to include Upstate New York. The Program, which is being expanded statewide, fills a void in conventional services available to veterans by streamlining the pathway for veterans seeking to enter the construction trade. The State Budget for SFY 2021-22 included an appropriation of \$200,000 to facilitate further the Program's statewide expansion. This was a legislative addition to the proposed Executive Budget.

Indigent Burial Services

Chapters 579 of the Laws of 2015, and Chapter 29 of the Laws of 2016, were enacted to provide dignified burials to indigent veterans. Congressional-chartered veterans' organizations are selected by the State and counties to provide these services. Some of these funds also are provided to counties that provide such burials. The State Budget for SFY 2021-22 includes a sub-allocation of \$100,000 to the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance for the payment of burial services for indigent veterans.

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, or 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' services. One of the key components of these courts is 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 also reintegrate into civilian society.

The State Budget for SFY 2021-22 included an appropriation of \$1,000,000 for the following purposes: to support veteran-to-veteran programs maintained by veterans' service organizations; to connect veteran defendants to treatment and support services directed by the criminal justice system; to support such treatment and support services; to provide services to support veterans to avoid involvement with the criminal justice system; to support programs providing counseling and advocacy activities for veterans; and, to provide assistance in securing benefits at the national, state, and local level. Funds will be made available pursuant to Request for Proposals for Congressional-chartered veterans' organizations and requests from the Office of Court Administration (OCA) for the various veterans' treatment courts. The \$1 million will be split evenly to service the veteran-to-veteran programs maintained by veterans' service organizations and the veteran mentor support system directed by the criminal justice services.

Justice for Heroes Initiatives

The unmet demand for legal services for veterans and service members remains significant. The Justice for Heroes Initiative is a competitive grant program among the State's law school clinics to provide free legal assistance to veterans and their family members. Areas include foreclosure prevention and other consumer protection matters, family law assistance, discharge upgrades, and complex appeals regarding VA benefits. The State Budget for SFY 2021-22 allocated \$250,000 for this Initiative.

Veterans of Foreign Wars, NYS Chapter Field Service Operation

In order to be a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), a person must be a U.S. citizen or U.S. national, have served in the Armed Forces of the United States, 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 State Budget for SFY 2021-22 included an appropriation of \$125,000 for the services and expenses of the VFW Chapter Field Service Operation. This was a legislative addition to the proposed Executive Budget.

North Country Veterans' Association

Located in Plattsburgh, New York, the nonprofit veteran-run North Country Veterans' Association works to assist veterans and their families in obtaining assistance, food, and services. The State Budget for SFY 2021-22 included an appropriation of \$100,000 for the services and expenses of the Association. This was a legislative addition to the proposed Executive Budget.

Clear Path for Veterans

Clear Path for Veterans' mission is to empower service members, veterans, and their families through supportive programs and services in a safe, respectful environment. Its model of service helps service members transition to civilian life through wellness-enhancing programming. The State Budget for SFY 2021-22 included an appropriation of \$250,000 for the services and expenses of the Clear Path for Veterans organization. This was a legislative addition to the proposed Executive Budget.

Veterans' Education Program

The Veterans' Education Program is operated by DVS. The program is located in Albany and New York City and investigates and approves post-secondary educational and vocational institutions to determine eligibility for the Division's education benefits including approval of on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs. The State Budget for SFY 2021-22 included an appropriation of \$2,025,000 for this Program.

Veterans Rebuilding Life Program

Located in Queens, New York, the Veterans Rebuilding Life Program targets gaps in existing services and provides evidence-based solutions that have a proven, lasting impact. The founding members are combat veterans from wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Among the services offered are employment, veterans legal services, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) counseling and family mediation. The State Budget for SFY 2021-22 included an appropriation of \$7,000 for the services and expenses of the Veterans Rebuilding Life Program. This was a legislative addition to the proposed Executive Budget.

Veterans in Command

The mission of Veterans in Command is to provide transitional housing for homeless veterans. The goal of the program is to help veterans reintegrate into society, build self-esteem and become more productive individuals. The State Budget for SFY 2021-22 included an appropriation of \$8,000 for the services and expenses of the Veterans in Command program. This is a legislative addition to the proposed Executive Budget.

Honor Flight Rochester, Inc.

Honor Flight, Inc. and affiliated hubs in the national Honor Flight Network, are private, not-for-profit organizations created solely to honor America's veterans for their many sacrifices. In June 2008, Rochester became an official hub in the Honor Flight Network. The goal of the Network is to fly veterans from the Greater Rochester area, who served honorably in the United States Armed Forces since World War II, to Washington, D.C. to visit the memorials built in their honor. The two-day trip is free for veterans. Since early 2009, more than 3,500 veterans have participated in this program. The State Budget for SFY 2021-22 allocated \$10,000 for services and expenses of the Honor Flight Rochester, Inc. program. This is a legislative addition to the proposed Executive Budget.

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 those barriers through coordinated advocacy. VJP 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 VJP was launched in 2011, at least 2,000 veterans and their family members have been assisted. The State Budget for SFY 2021-2022 included an appropriation of \$100,000 for services and expenses of the VJP at LSNYC. This was a legislative addition to the proposed Executive Budget.

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF), Inc.

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) Inc., is the not-for-profit organization established on April 27, 1979, to finance the construction of a memorial to those Americans who served or died during the Vietnam War. The Fund paid for the development of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, dedicated on the National Mall on November 11, 1982. VVMF continues to pay tribute to our nation's Vietnam veterans and their families and to educate all generations about the impact of the Vietnam War and era. Monies received provide funding for VVMF outreach efforts. The State Budget for SFY 2021-22 included an appropriation of \$25,000 for the services and expenses of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. This is a legislative addition to the proposed Executive Budget.

Administration Programs

The Administration Program is composed of two benefit components: Supplemental Burial and Gold Star Parents Annuity. The State Budget for SFY 2021-22 included an appropriation of \$1,479,000, which includes funding for administrative personnel and operational expenses.

New York State Supplemental Burial Benefits

New York State offers a supplemental burial benefits program to eligible families of military personnel who were killed in combat or wounded in combat and died from their wounds outside of the combat zone. The State Budget for SFY 2021-22 included an appropriation of \$400,000 for these benefits.

Gold Star Parents

Gold Star Parents refer to parents who lost children in the armed services during a time of war. This appropriation supports the payment of a \$500 annuity to a Gold Star Parent, with up to two parents eligible for this annual benefit. The State Budget for SFY 2021-22 included an appropriation of \$599,000 for such payments.

Blind Veteran Annuity Assistance Program

The Blind Veteran Annuity Assistance Program provides legally blind wartime veterans or surviving un-remarried spouses of legally blind wartime veterans who live in New York with an annuity payment. The State Budget for SFY 2021-22 included an appropriation of \$6,380,000.

Division of Military and Naval Affairs

New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center

The New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center are located in the Saratoga Armory in Saratoga Springs, New York. The State Budget for SFY 2021-22 included an appropriation of \$1,000,000 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. In addition, the Budget included an appropriation of \$8,850,000 for operating expenses associated with the New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center.

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 began operating in four test counties: Suffolk, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Jefferson, and has since been expanded to fund 23 additional counties: Broome, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Columbia, Dutchess, Erie, Genesee, Monroe, Nassau, Niagara, Onondaga, Orange, Orleans, Putnam, Rockland, Saratoga, Suffolk, Sullivan, Ulster, Warren, Washington, Westchester, and Wyoming. The State Budget for SFY 2021-22 included an appropriation of \$4.5 million to fund all 25 counties as well as the University at Albany School of Social Welfare. The SFY 2021-22 appropriation also included \$400,000 for New York City.

Suicide Prevention

Suicide is a public health concern that affects all New Yorkers. The State Budget included \$1,000,000 for services and expenses of suicide prevention efforts for veterans, first responders, law enforcement, and corrections officers.

Office of Children and Families

The State Budget for SFY 2021-22 included an appropriation of \$5,000,000 for permanent, emergency, and transitional housing for veterans in accordance with Article 2A of the Social Services Law. However, if there are an insufficient number of viable veterans’ proposals any remaining funds can be used for other priority groups.

Department of Agriculture and Markets

Cornell Small Farms Program

The Cornell Small Farms Program, which was funded previously in the State Budget as part of a first-in-the-nation pilot program, provides resources and training to veterans seeking to become farmers. The State Budget for SFY 2021-22 included an appropriation of \$115,000 to help establish up to five veteran-owned farms. This was a legislative addition to the proposed Executive Budget.

Division of Criminal Justice Services

Legal Services Assistance Fund (LSAF)

The Legal Services Assistance Fund was established pursuant to Chapter 524 of the Laws of 2008 to assist in the provision of and the reimbursement of expenses incurred by local government agencies and not-for-profit providers or their employees relating to providing criminal or civil legal services. The State Budget for SFY 2021-22 included an appropriation of \$950,000 for domestic violence and veterans' legal services programs.

NYU Veteran's Entrepreneurship Program

The NYU Veteran's Entrepreneurship Program is designed for veterans who want to transition into entrepreneurship after completion of their military service and is open to veterans with early-stage companies or ideas for companies. Those in the Program learn from academic experts, and industry leaders through hands on experiential learning, mentorships, and capstone projects. Upon completion, graduates earn a VET Certificate from the Future Labs at NYU Tandon. The State Budget for 2021-22 includes an appropriation of \$26,000 for this program. The Program was started by former Assembly Member Joseph Lentol.

ARTICLE VII LANGUAGE BILLS

A.3005-C Budget

Chapter 55

Part F

This Part extends until September 1, 2026, the Recruitment Incentive and Retention Program for certain active members of the New York Army National Guard, New York Air National Guard and New York Naval Militia.

A.2509-C Budget

Chapter 59

Part II

This Part extends until January 1, 2023, the Hire-A-Vet Business Tax Credit. This tax credit seeks to encourage the full-time employment of a veteran by providing employers with a credit based on the wages paid. Employers who hire a qualified veteran for a period of not less than one year for at least 35 hours per week are eligible. Employers who hire a disabled veteran receive an expanded benefit.

Resolution E 446
Adopted June 10, 2021

Section 1 of Chapter 653 of the Laws of 2021 provides grants to certain school districts, public libraries, and not-for-profit institutions. Funds are apportioned pursuant to a plan setting forth an itemized list of grantees with the amount received by each, or the methodology for allocating such appropriation. The resulting Plan is subject to the approval of the Assembly Speaker and the Director of the Budget and included in a resolution to be approved by the Assembly. These items include the following items of interest to the veteran community:

Division of Veterans' Services

American Legion Post Arthur Butler Post No. 359, located in East Syracuse, \$25,000
Dunbar American Legion Post 1942, located in Syracuse, \$25,000
East Rockaway No. 958 American Legion, Inc., \$10,000
Great Chazy River Memorial Post No. 1418, Inc.; \$25,000
Hudson Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1314, \$10,000
Veterans of Foreign Wars Howard-Lathrop Post 2370, \$10,000
Veterans Outreach Center, Inc. located in Rochester, \$250,000

Hudson River Housing, Inc.

Hudson River Housing, located in Poughkeepsie, New York, has a mission to eliminate veterans' suicides and homelessness. Services for veterans include quality, affordable housing, specialized housing, transportation, advocacy, and care management. This program was allocated \$10,000.

Malta Veterans Appreciation Program Corp

The Malta Veterans Appreciation Program's mission is to provide charitable support for veterans. The Program helps veterans to find a safe, comfortable environment where they will be able to thrive and lead a full life. This Program is also a memorial that will commemorate and recognize veterans' past, present, and future and their family members. This Program was allocated \$40,000.

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. VVA's founding principle is "never again will one generation of veterans abandon another." The Council's purpose is to help foster, encourage, and promote the improvement of the condition of Vietnam-era veterans and assist disabled and needy military veterans, including, but not limited to, Vietnam-era veterans and their dependents, and the widows and orphans of deceased veterans. Council members also provide assistance in navigating the various benefits available to veterans and their family members. This Program was allocated \$100,000.

WNY Heroes, Inc.

This group, located in Williamsville, New York, provides immediate financial assistance for veterans and their families in need, including Heroes’ Bridge, which pays up to four month’s rent, mortgage, and utilities. This program was allocated \$25,000.

Richmond County Public Administrator

The Richmond County Public Administrator oversees estates of deceased persons including veterans. The Administrator’s primary duties include the administration of estates that otherwise remain un-administrated, protecting decedents’ property from waste, loss, or theft, and to make appropriate burial arrangements when no close relatives are available. The Administrator works with local elected officials, funeral homes and cemeteries. This program was allocated \$20,000.

Staff Sgt. Michel Ollis Freedom Foundation, Inc.

This organization was established in Staten Island, New York in 2014 and was named after a Staten Island native from New Drop, New York, who died at 24 years old while saving a Polish soldier in Afghanistan. The group assists and supports veterans who served in combat to re-enter civilian life. This program was allocated \$20,000.

Sgt. Stephen Siller Tunnel to Towers Foundation

This Foundation honors the sacrifice of firefighter Stephen Siller who laid down his life to save others on 9/11. This Foundation, located in Staten Island, honors military and first responders who continue to make the supreme sacrifice of life and limbs. The Foundation’s programs include the Gold Star Family Home Program that provides a mortgage-free home to surviving spouses with young children, and Smart Home, in which homes for catastrophically injured veterans and first responders are adapted to address the unique needs of each individual. The program was allocated \$20,000.

Office of Mental Health

Additional counties have been included to receive funding for the Joseph P. Dwyer Veteran Peer-To-Peer Pilot Program under this Resolution which was adopted in June 2021. These counties are:

Albany County	\$105,000
Clinton and Franklin Counties	\$ 75,000
Cortland County	\$105,000
Oneida County	\$105,000
Schenectady County	\$105,000

IV. VETERAN-RELATED BILLS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES THAT BECAME LAW

Higher Education Committee

MERIT Scholarship Expansion (A.7685 Barrett; Chapter 611 of the Laws of 2021)

This law increases the Military Enhanced Recognition Incentive and Tribute (MERIT) Scholarship Program, which was established to help veteran families that served during the Persian Gulf War. The law revises the requirements regarding dates of services and eliminates the requirement that the veteran have served in a combat theater or a combat zone of operations as part of military operations.

In-State Tuition for Military Spouses (A.6249-A Buttenschon; Chapter 604 of the Laws of 2021)

This law allows the spouse or dependent of an active duty service member who has been accepted at an institution of higher learning to be deemed an in-state resident for tuition purposes even if their military spouse or parent has been transferred to another state, as long as they remain continuously enrolled.

Local Governments Committee

Waive Certain Fees for Veterans' Organizations (A.2658 Sayegh; Chapter 601 of the Laws of 2021)

This law authorizes the Westchester County Legislature to waive fees associated with capital improvements to any post or hall owned by a not-for-profit congressionally chartered veterans' organization located in the County.

Mental Health Committee

9-8-8 Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Crisis Hotline System (A.7177-B Gunther; Passed both Houses)

On October 17, 2021, the Federal National Suicide Hotline Designation Act was signed into law. This law follows FCC's designation of a 3-digit number to replace the existing suicide hotline number. This bill establishes a 9-8-8 suicide and mental health crisis hotline system. As well, it provides crisis intervention services and crisis care coordination via the 9-8-8 suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline.

Governmental Employees Committee

Veterans' Civil Service Credits

(A.5447 Abbate; Chapter 608 of the Laws of 2021)

This law eliminates the requirements that a veteran had to serve during a time of war in order to receive credits for civil service appointments and promotions.

Study on The Employment of Persons and Veterans with Disabilities

(A.7223-A Epstein; Chapter 710 of the Laws of 2021)

This law requires the President of the Civil Service Commission to conduct a study on the employment of persons and veterans with disabilities by the State and make recommendations as to whether the State needs to hire more persons and veterans with disabilities to fill the positions created by Sections 55-B and 55-C of the Civil Service Law.

Judiciary Committee

Action For the Recovery of Damages For those Who Were Exposed to Burn Pits

(A.4474-A Hunter; Passed both Houses)

This law would permanently revive time barred causes of action for a chronic condition caused by contact with or exposure to toxic burn pits for veterans who served in the Middle East beginning August 2, 1990.

Veterans Treatment Courts

(A.5719-A Galef; Chapter 91 of the Laws of 2021)

This law expressly authorizes the Chief Administrative judge to designate additional veteran treatment courts (VTCs) and authorizes the transfer of appropriate veteran cases from a criminal court in a county that does not have a VTC to an adjoining county that does. In inter-county circumstances, with the consent of the sending and receiving county's District Attorney, the court may order the removal of the action to a VTC in an adjoining county. The law would prohibit transfer of a VTC in cases where the offense charged is a family offense, as defined in the Criminal Procedure Law, involving members of the same family or household.

Transportation Committee

"Atomic Veterans Memorial Bridge"

(A.1456 Byrne; Chapter 439 of the Laws of 2021)

This law would designate the pedestrian crossing across the Taconic State Parkway, in the town of Yorktown, Westchester County as the "Atomic Veterans Memorial Bridge." Between 1945 and 1963, the United States conducted about 235 nuclear tests. During this time, at least 220,000 Americans service workers participated in these tests, or served in the United States military forces occupying Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This law seeks to ensure these veterans are remembered.

Benefit Information

(A.3920 Dinowitz; Chapter 602 of the Laws of 2021)

This law requires the Commissioner of the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to consult with the Director of Veterans' Services to create a program that enables veterans and reservists to receive benefit information from the Division of Veterans' Services when applying for or renewing a driver license or non-driver identification card.

Free Ferry Transportation for Members of the Armed Forces

(A.4089 Thiele; Chapter 603 of the Laws of 2021)

This law authorizes a county board of supervisors to require a ferry operating within such county to transport any soldier, sailor or marine in uniform during their term of enlistment in the service of the United States without charge.

Exemption from Operating Requirements for a Motor Vehicle

(A.6968 Magnarelli; Chapter 454 of the Laws of 2021)

This law authorizes certain military dependents who have complied with the laws of a state, territory, federal district or foreign country to operate a motor vehicle or motorcycle in New York State without being licensed in the State of New York. The law also provides exemptions in cases where such person previously had a New York State license suspended.

Education Committee

Advance Enrollment of Certain Students

(A.6528-A Braunstein; Chapter 605 of the Laws of 2021)

This law addresses the need to alleviate the challenges military connected students face due to frequent moves during their K-12 education years. This law allows military orders to be accepted as proof of residency for the purpose of enrollment in a public school by children of members of the Armed Forces.

Labor Committee

Unemployment Compensation for Military Spouses

(A.7514 Frontus; Chapter 610 of the Laws of 2021)

This law adds a military transfer to the list of non-disqualifying reasons for separation from employment. New York State is one of only two states that fails to provide unemployment compensation to military spouses subject to a forced move.

V. HONORING VETERANS THROUGH LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTIONS

Commemorating the 102nd Anniversary of The American Legion (Resolution No. 113, Barrett)

The American Legion is a veteran organization that was founded in Paris on March 15, 1919, by three officers of the American Expeditionary Forces, who fought in World War I. On May 8, 1919, the St. Louis Caucus was held to organize the soldiers and sailors in every state to become members of the new organization. On May 24, 1919, the national organization issued the Department of New York American Legion its charter. On September 16, 1919, the United States Congress chartered The American Legion. This resolution commemorates the 102nd anniversary of The American Legion.

Commemorating the 77th Anniversary of the D-Day Invasion on June 6, 2021 (Resolution No. 444, Barrett)

On June 6, 1944, the Allied Forces in Europe combined for the extensive aerial and sea assault operation, known as the D-Day Invasion, at the beaches of Normandy, France. This military undertaking would change the direction of World War II. The code-name was Operation Overlord, consisting of five infantry divisions, two American, two British, and one Canadian, assigned to beaches code-named, from west to east, Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno, and Sword. This resolution commemorates the 77th anniversary of one of the largest successful amphibious military assaults in history.

Commemorating the 101st Anniversary of the American Legion Auxiliary Department of New York (Resolution No. 114, Barrett)

The American Legion Auxiliary Department of New York was founded in 1919 and has promoted patriotism, encouraged good citizenship, and has supported the principles and endeavors of all the American Legion for 101 years. The Legion Auxiliary administers hundreds of volunteer programs, gives tens of thousands of hours to its communities and to veterans, and raises millions of dollars to support its own programs as well as other charities. This resolution commemorates the 101st anniversary of the American Legion Auxiliary Department of New York.

Commemorating June 14, 2021, As Flag Day (Resolution No. 408, Solages)

Flag Day was first celebrated in 1877, the centennial of the U.S. flag's existence. Flag Day was officially established by a proclamation of President Woodrow Wilson on May 30, 1916. While Flag Day was celebrated in various communities after Wilson's proclamation, it was not until August 3, 1949, that President Harry S Truman signed an Act of Congress designating June 14th each year as Flag Day. This resolution commemorates June 14, 2021 as Flag Day.

Recognizing May 16-22, 2021, as Military Animal Appreciation Week (Resolution No. 306, Manktelow)

There is a long history of animals including dogs, dolphins, rats, mules, donkeys, and pigeons, participating in military operations. Military canines are the most used military animals having served in every major conflict since the Revolutionary War. Since that time, the United States service members have used a variety of pack animals in removal areas and elite Special Operations. This resolution honors all military animals for their service.

Commending the Capital Region Chamber of Commerce's Unified Military Affairs Council (UMAC) (Resolution No. 411, Santabarbara)

The United Military Affairs Council Program increases public knowledge of the contributions made by military units in the Capital Region, which impact our global, national, state, and regional economy. The Council highlights the importance of the military presence in the Capital area that includes the Stratton Air National Guard Base, the U.S. Army Watervliet Arsenal, the Navy Support Activity in Saratoga Springs, and the Nuclear Power Training Unit. This resolution commends the Capital Regional Chamber of Commerce's Unified Military Affairs Council (UMAC).

Commending the Jewish War Veterans on its 125th Anniversary and Paying Tribute to its Members for Their Outstanding Contribution (Resolution No. 424, Barrett)

The Jewish War Veterans were founded on March 15, 1896, in New York City by Civil War veterans distressed by the community held belief that Jews avoided military service. The Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America is the oldest veteran's organization in the country. In 1958 it was chartered by Congress. This resolution commends the Jewish War Veterans of the United States on its 125th Anniversary.

Commemorating the 103rd Anniversary of the Harlem Hellfighters (Resolution No. 437, Dickens)

The 369th Infantry Regiment, formerly known as the 15th New York National Guard Regiment, was an infantry regiment of the United States Army National Guard during World War I and World War II. The regiment consisted mainly of African Americans and was the first African American regiment to serve with the American Expeditionary Force during World War I. The nickname Harlem Hellfighters was given to them by the Germans due to their toughness and that they never lost a man through capture or loss of ground to the enemy. This resolution commemorates the 103rd Anniversary of the Harlem Hellfighters and pays tribute to these soldiers of the 369th Infantry Regiment for their courage, bravery, service, and dedication to the United States Army.

Commemorating the 100th Anniversary of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery (Resolution No. 441, Cusick)

November 11, 2021, marks the 100th Anniversary of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery. New York Congressman and World War I veteran, Hamilton Fish, Jr. prepared legislation in December 1920, providing for the internment of one unknown soldier in Arlington National Cemetery. The purpose of the federal legislation was “to bring home the body of an unknown American warrior who in himself represents no section, creed or race in the late war and who typifies however, the soul of America and the supreme sacrifice of her heroic dead.” Starting in 1937, the guards began always standing watch over the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. This resolution commemorates the 100th Anniversary of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and honors the members of “The Old Guard” who stand watch over the Tomb.

Commending Eugene D. Dollard for Receiving France’s Legion of Honor Medal (Resolution No. 351, Hawley)

Eugene D. Dollard, a World War II veteran who survived fighting Germans in France, was honored by the Ambassador to France for aiding the liberation of hundreds of thousands from the grips of the Nazis 77 years ago. The Legion of Honor Medal, established by French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802, is France’s highest accolade conferred for military bravery and service. This resolution commends Eugene D. Dollard upon the occasion of being awarded France’s Legion of Honor Medal.

VI. HONORING SERVICE MEMBERS THROUGH LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTIONS

Recognizing September 26, 2021, as Gold Star Mother's and Family's Day, and Honoring the Sacrifices of the Gold Star Family Members from the State of New York (Resolution No. 443, Barrett)

A Gold Star family is the immediate family member(s) of a service member who dies while serving in a time of conflict. Gold Star Mother's Day has been observed by presidential proclamation each year since 1936, beginning with Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Since 2009, the last Sunday in September has been designated as Gold Star Mother's and Family's Day. This resolution recognizes September 26, 2021, as Gold Star Mother's and Family's Day in the State of New York.

Mourning the Death of Chief Warrant Officers Steve Skoda, Christian Koch, and Daniel Prial (Resolution No. 35, Bronson)

This Legislative Resolution mourns the loss of three New York Army National Guard members, all members of the Company of the 1st Battalion 17th General Support Aviation Battalion, who died in an aircraft crash during a military training exercise on Wednesday, January 20, 2021. Chief Warrant Officer Steven Skoda was a 35-year veteran of the United States Army and the Army National Guard. He served in the Afghanistan War in two deployments, 2013 and 2019. Chief Warrant Officer Christian Koch was a 20-year veteran of the National Guard as well as a pilot with the New York State Police aviation unit. He was a veteran of the Afghanistan War and the Iraq War. Chief Warrant Officer Daniel Prial was a member of the National Guard for one year. He was a West Point graduate and had served in the United States Army since 2012. This resolution recognizes the sacrifices of these outstanding New Yorkers.

Mourning the Tragic and Untimely Death of United States Army Specialist Abigail Jenks, (Resolution No. 238, Woerner)

United States Army Specialist Abigail Jenks from Gansevoort, New York suffered a fatal injury during a training operation while conducting a static-line jump from a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter on Monday, April 19, 2021, at Fort Bragg in North Carolina. Specialist Jenks was a member of the United States Army's 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division. She was a fire support specialist serving as a forward observer with the brigade's Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment. This resolution mourns the loss of United States Army Specialist Abigail Jenks.

VII. MEMORIALIZING THE GOVERNOR TO PROCLAIM VETERAN-RELATED EVENTS

Memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim March 13, 2021, as K9 Veterans Day. (Resolution No. 103, Santabarbara)

The official K9 Corps was created on March 13, 1942, by Joseph J. White, a retired military working dog handler. Military dogs have served in many ways in all our wars, having been deployed by the United States Military from World War I to present conflicts. This resolution memorializes Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim March 13, 2021, as K9 Veterans Day.

Memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim March 29, 2021, as Vietnam Veterans' Day (Resolution No. 142, Barrett)

More than three million American service members fought in the Vietnam War from 1961 to 1975. In 2017, President Trump signed the Vietnam War Recognition Act which encourages Americans to fly the American Flag on National Vietnam Veterans Day every year on March 29th. This resolution memorializes Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to honor that service and proclaim March 29, 2021, as Vietnam Veterans' Day.

Memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim April 9, 2021, as Yellow Ribbon Day (Resolution No. 106, Walsh)

Yellow ribbons are symbols that people can display to show support for and solidarity with the service members around the world protecting our nation. This resolution memorializes Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim April 9, 2021, as Yellow Ribbon Day.

Memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim April 11, 2021, as Submarine Day (Resolution No. 163, Walsh)

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 submarine has played a vital part in wars and in the preservation of naval security and strategic readiness. This resolution memorializes Governor Cuomo to proclaim April 11, 2021, as Submarine Day.

Memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to Proclaim April 2021, as the Month of the Military Child (Resolution No. 182, Hunter).

Established in 1986, the Month of the Military Child is part of the legacy left by former Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger and brings attention to the important role military children play in the armed forces community. The Month of the Military Child is a time to applaud military families and their children for the daily sacrifices they make and the challenges they overcome. This resolution memorializes Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim April 2021, as the Month of the Military Child.

Memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to Proclaim May 2021, as Military Appreciation Month (Resolution No. 277, Barrett)

National Military Appreciation Month includes VE Day, Military Spouse Appreciation Day, Loyalty Day, Armed Forces Day, Public Service Recognition Week, and Memorial Day. This month recognizes those on active duty in all branches of service, the National Guard and Reserves, military retirees, veterans, and all their families. This resolution memorializes Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim May 2021, as Military Appreciation Month.

Memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to Proclaim May 7, 2021, as Military Spouse Appreciation Day. (Resolution No. 246, Barrett)

On April 17, 1984, President Ronald Reagan recognized the profound importance of spousal commitment to the readiness and well-being of military members with Proclamation 5184. Congress officially made Military Spouse Appreciation Day part of National Military Appreciation Month in 1999. On Military Spouse Appreciation Day, we honor the contribution and sacrifices made by military spouses whose commitment and support help to keep our country safe. This resolution memorializes, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim May 7, 2021, as Military Spouse Appreciation Day.

Memorializing Andrew M. Cuomo to Proclaim June 2021, as Post-Traumatic Stress Injury Awareness Month, and June 27, 2021, as Post-Traumatic Stress Injury Awareness Day (Resolution No. 415, Gunther)

The diagnosis known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was first defined by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980 to more effectively understand and treat veterans who endured severe traumatic combat stress. This resolution memorializes Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim June 2021 as Post-Traumatic Stress Injury Awareness Month and June 27, 2021, as Post-Traumatic Stress Injury Day.

Memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to Proclaim June 12, 2021, as Women Veterans Recognition Day in the State of New York (Resolution No. 447, Hunter)

Seventy-three years ago, on June 12, 1948, President Harry S Truman signed into law the Women's Armed Services Act of 1948 (P.L. 625-80th Congress). This law ensured that women would have a permanent place in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines. It is important to recognize the contributions and tremendous sacrifices women veterans have made over the years serving our nation in the military forces. This resolution memorializes Governor Cuomo to proclaim, Wednesday, June 12, 2021, as Women Veterans Recognition Day.

Memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim September 17, 2021, as POW/MIA Day (Resolution No. 449, Cusick)

Each year, the third Friday in September is set aside to honor the commitment and sacrifices made by Prisoners of War (POW) and those who are still Missing in Action (MIA), as well as their families. Currently, there are 73,539 persons unaccounted for from World War II, 7,882 from the Korean War, 126 from the Cold War, 1,641 from the Vietnam War and 6 from recent conflicts, for a total of 83,194 soldiers either held as Prisoners of War or classified as Missing in Action. This resolution memorializes Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim September 17, 2021, as POW/MIA Day to ensure all New Yorkers remember to stand behind those who served and to make sure we do everything we can to account for those who have never returned.

Memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to Proclaim November 2021, as Military Family Appreciation Month (Resolution No. 455, Barrett)

Military Family Appreciation Month was established in 1993 by the Armed Services YMCA with the United States Government recognizing the occasion every year since. During Military Family Appreciation Month, we honor the contributions and sacrifices made by military families, whose commitment and support help keep our country safe. This resolution memorializes Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim November 2021, as Military Family Appreciation Month.

VIII. OTHER ACTIVITIES BY THE VETERANS' COMMITTEE

A. Hearings and Roundtables

Regional Roundtables

The Committee Chair hosted three regional meetings with members of the Committee to learn more about issues of concern to veterans across the State. At these virtual regional meetings, veterans spoke about the needs and successes of the veteran community.

Restructuring the New York State Division of Veterans' Services (DVS)

On October 21, 2021, the New York State Assembly Standing Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and the Subcommittee on Women Veterans held a public hearing to review the purpose and structure of DVS, including the possibility of elevating the Division to a Department, to ensure the best possible services are available to New York's veterans. The New York State Division of Veterans' Services was established over 75 years ago to serve World War II veterans. Today, the Division serves veterans and service members from all eras but remains relatively unchanged in structure and purpose. Participants included the New York State Division of Veterans' Services, the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University, the New York State Health Foundation, the President of Siena College, the Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of New York, the American Legion Department of New York, SAGE, and the Rochester Veterans Outreach Center.

B. Subcommittee on Women Veterans

The Subcommittee on Women Veterans sponsored the 28th annual Women Veterans' Recognition Day on Tuesday August 17, 2021, hosting its second virtual program to recognize and celebrate the brave women who so valiantly served our nation. The guest speakers included Marcelle L. Leis, Chief Master Sergeant (Retired) and Wendy McClinton. Leis is the Director of Veterans Services for the Association for Mental Health and Wellness under the Joseph P. Dwyer Veteran Support Project. McClinton is the President and CEO of Black Veterans for Social Justice. The Excelsior Cornet Band ended the special event by playing the official song of each military branch.

IX. OUTLOOK FOR 2022

The Committee is looking forward to a productive year in 2022 and will continue to work with the DVS, the Division of Military and Naval Affairs, other State agencies, veterans' organizations, and individual veterans throughout New York State to develop legislation to assist the veterans of the State.

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

- beginning the process of changing the Division of Veterans' Services to a Department of Veterans' Services;
- improving veterans' mental health and outreach programs to help veterans in need of specific care related to mental health, PTSD, TBI, MST, and substance abuse;
- increasing outreach to recently discharged veterans;
- reviewing veterans' employment opportunities;
- increasing outreach to veterans of all ages in all areas of the State;
- tailoring outreach to women and minority veterans to better identify and respond to their needs;
- continuing to review any COVID-19 issues, such as housing stability, specific to veterans;
- increasing access to programs such as the PFC Joseph Dwyer Peer-to-Peer Veterans Counseling Program; and,
- reviewing supportive measures for Veterans Service Organizations, like the VFW and American Legion.

The Committee will continue to strive to address the needs of New York's more than 700,000 veterans and their families.

APPENDIX A
2021 SUMMARY SHEET

Summary of Action on All Bills Referred to the Committee on
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Final Action	<u>Assembly Bills</u>	<u>Senate Bills</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Bills Reported With or Without Amendment</u>			
To Floor; Not Returning to Committee (Favorable)	3	0	3
To Ways & Means	8	0	8
To Codes	1	0	1
To Rules	2	0	2
To Judiciary	0	0	0
Total	14	0	14
<u>Bills Having Committee Reference Changed</u>			
To Ways and Means	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0
<u>Bills Defeated in Committee</u>	0	0	0
<u>Bills Held for Consideration With a Roll-Call Vote</u>		0	
<u>Bills Never Reported or Held in Committee</u>	0	0	0
<u>Bills Having Enacting Clause Stricken</u>		0	
<u>Motion to Discharge Lost</u>	0	0	0
TOTAL BILLS REMAINING IN COMMITTEE	39	5	44
TOTAL NUMBER OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD		3	

APPENDIX B

COMMITTEE CHAPTERS

Assembly Bill	Sponsor	Description	Final Action
A.1140-A	Wallace	Creates the women veterans advisory committee.	Chapter 600
A.1920	Barrett	Facilities the development of a New York State veterans' cemetery.	Chapter 41
A.2014	Barrett	Permits any individual licensed to provide health care in the State to make determination regarding qualifying conditions.	Chapter 111
A.2203	Barrett	Requires DVS to provide additional information concerning PTSD and TBI.	Chapter 443
A.3237-A	Hunter	Increases information available about veterans' suicides.	Chapter 657
A.5836-A	Cusick	Creates a temporary veterans' suicide prevention task force	Awaiting action
A.6100-A	Cusick	Relates to certain questions regarding veterans on intake forms for admission and residency	Chapter 609
A.7388-B	Barrett	Revises the date of the start of the Vietnam War	Chapter 606
A.7472	Stern	Establishes a temporary task force on veteran employment opportunities	Chapter 607

APPENDIX C

COMMITTEE BILLS THAT PASSED THE ASSEMBLY ONLY

Assembly Bill	Sponsor	Description
A.1782	Jean-Pierre	Makes veteran discharge information available to local service agencies.
A.4660-A	Cruz	Establishes the Alex R. Jimenez New York State military immigrant family legacy program.
A.7605	Barrett	Extends the definition of veteran to include members of the commissioned corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the United States Public Health Service.
A.7606	Barrett	Includes the Space Force within the definition of veterans