



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

Senator Murphy backs bill making Veterans with PTSD eligible for Medical Marijuana

TERRENCE MURPHY June 22, 2017

| ISSUE: **VETERANS, PTSD, MEDICAL MARIJUANA**



Albany, NY - After more than a decade of war in Iraq and Afghanistan, more than 300,000 veterans have been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Senator Terrence Murphy, a long-time advocate for our veterans, has seen the effects of PTSD first-hand, and has co-sponsored legislation that would ease the constant pain, depression and occurrence of substance abuse among veterans. With Senator Murphy's support, legislation that would add post-traumatic stress disorder to the list of conditions that can be treated in New York with medical marijuana was approved by the Senate earlier this week by a vote of 50-13.

The bi-partisan bill (S05629), sponsored in the Senate by Senator Diane Savino and in the

Assembly by Assemblyman Dick Gottfried, would make PTSD an eligible condition under the State's medical marijuana law.

"Many of our veterans have witnessed their friends being injured or dying, or they may have been seriously injured themselves. Their experiences have left them traumatized, unable to sleep, socialize or even be the person they once were," said Senator Murphy. "Too many self-medicate. They may drink heavily or abuse prescription drugs, which can cause their lives to spiral out of control. If we can ease their pain through medical marijuana, then I'm behind it. If it's properly regulated, medical marijuana can improve our veterans' quality of life."

"We're here to help people who are in need with sickness or some disease like PTSD to make them feel better, get rid of that pain," State Council of Veterans Organizations' Legislative Director Bob Becker said recently. He maintains he is personally opposed to a more open marijuana market, but added, "... There's nothing wrong with that."

PTSD is an anxiety disorder that can occur when a person is exposed to an extraordinary life-threatening situation, such as front line battle. Roughly 20% of veterans who served in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom have suffered from PTSD. About 12% of Gulf War Veterans have experienced a form of PTSD, while 30% of Vietnam War have had some form of PTSD in their lifetime.

A veteran with PTSD often relives the traumatic event through nightmares, intrusive memories and flashbacks, and may experience feelings of isolation, irritability and guilt. They may also have problems sleeping and can find it difficult to concentrate.

The bill was passed in the Assembly in early May. After passing in the Senate, it was sent to Governor Andrew Cuomo for his approval. If the legislation is signed by Governor Cuomo, PTSD would become the 12th condition treatable with medical marijuana products. Others on the list include cancer, chronic pain and epilepsy.