



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michelle Hinchey

Hinchey Honors 2024 Veterans' Hall of Fame Inductee, Army Sergeant First Class Bill Forte, at District Ceremony

MICHELLE HINCHEY December 17, 2024



Longtime Chair of the Kingston Veterans Association and Commander of the Ulster County Disabled American Veterans Honored by Hinchey For a Lifetime of Service to His Country and Community

Saugerties, NY — In a local ceremony held at the Hudson Valley National Center for Veteran Reintegration (HVNCVR), Senator Michelle Hinchey honored Army Sergeant First Class and Kingston Veterans Association Chairman Bill Forte, whom she inducted into the New York State Senate Veterans' Hall of Fame earlier this year at the New York State Capitol. Established in 2005, the Veterans' Hall of Fame is a prestigious honor recognizing veterans from the Empire State who have distinguished themselves in both their military and civilian endeavors. Hinchey

was joined for the celebration by Bill and Doris Forte, HVNCVR Co-founder & Executive Director Kevin Keaveny, Ulster County Veterans Services Director Mark Cozzupoli, and veterans from across Ulster County.

Senator Michelle Hinchey said, “I was proud to induct Army Sergeant First Class and longtime Kingston Veterans Association Chair Bill Forte into the NYS Senate Veterans’ Hall of Fame this past May. We had a beautiful celebration at the NYS Capitol, but honoring Bill here, in his community, with those who know him best, felt just as important. Bill exemplifies the power of service—dedicating himself to advocating for his fellow veterans not because it's easy but because it's needed. After over two decades in the Army, Bill has made veterans' causes his life's work, and his place in the Senate Veterans’ Hall of Fame ensures his legacy will be celebrated across the State of New York for generations to come.”

Army Sergeant First Class William J. Forte served over 20 years in the military, with deployments in Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada and Operation Desert Storm in the Middle East, serving with the 353rd Civil Affairs Command.

Forte joined the U.S. Army at 17 years old in 1971, completing training at Fort Dix, New Jersey, and Advanced Infantry Training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Determined to serve his country in the Vietnam War, Forte volunteered himself multiple times; however, due to his age, he was assigned to the 1st Infantry Division in Germany and later to the Army Headquarters in Heidelberg, rising to the rank of Sergeant. Forte excelled in various capacities, serving at West Point in the 1st Battalion 1st Infantry and the 528th Engineer Detachment, with two additional deployments to Germany.

Throughout his career, Mr. Forte earned nearly 20 awards, including the Legion of Merit, three Meritorious Service Medals, three Army Commendation Medals, seven Good Conduct Medals, and the National Defense Service Medal. Forte retired in 1991 as a Sergeant First Class and has been involved in local Veterans Affairs ever since.

Forte is a longtime leader in the Kingston veterans community, serving as Chair of the Kingston Veterans Association for 19 years. He was named Kingston Veterans Association Veteran of the

Year in 2009 and has held leadership roles with the Ulster County Vietnam Veterans and Disabled American Veterans. Forte initiated Kingston's Hometown Hero Program, which displays over 1,000 banners honoring local veterans citywide. He also organized the city's first exhibition of the Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall and the 2021 presentation of a half-scale replica of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Additionally, he helps maintain the Mt. Zion African American Burial Ground, which is the final resting place for many Civil War veterans.

His efforts also include organizing events such as Memorial Day and Veterans Day ceremonies, and recognizing Korean and Gulf War veterans. This recognition bestowed by Senator Hinchey ensures that Forte's lifetime of service is celebrated not just in his community but throughout New York State.

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