



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara seeking nominations for Senate 'Veterans Hall of Fame'

THOMAS F. O'MARA February 4, 2025

| ISSUE: **VETERANS HALL OF FAME**



Senator O'Mara and his 2024 "Veterans Hall of Fame" inductee, Merle John Tobias, a native of Hornell who served in the United States Army during the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and throughout the Persian Gulf War.

So many veterans served our nation courageously and honorably and then returned home to contribute to the strength of our local communities. The Senate Veterans Hall of Fame is just one more way to give a local veteran a well-deserved and well-earned expression of our admiration, gratitude and respect.

Elmira, N.Y., February 4—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R-C, Big Flats) is seeking nominations for the New York State Senate "Veterans Hall of Fame," an online tribute to the military

service and civilian lives of distinguished veterans from the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, and throughout New York State.

O'Mara is currently accepting nominations for the 2025 inductee to represent the 58th Senate District at a ceremony in Albany in late May.

Nominations will be accepted until Friday, March 8, 2025. Nomination letters should include a short biography highlighting the nominee's military and civilian service, including awards and achievements, and be e-mailed to omara@nysenate.gov.

"So many veterans served our nation courageously and honorably and then returned home to contribute to the strength of our local communities. The Senate Veterans Hall of Fame is just one more way to give a local veteran a well-deserved and well-earned expression of our admiration, gratitude and respect," said O'Mara, who represents New York's 58th Senate District encompassing Chemung, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Tioga, and Yates counties, and part of Allegany County (the towns of Alfred, Almond, Amity, Andover, Birdsall, Burns, Grove, Independence, Scio, Ward, Wellsville, and Willing).

The Senate established its Veterans Hall of Fame in 2005. It honors New York State veterans whose service in the United States Armed Forces has been accompanied by service to the community and accomplishments as a civilian. It pays tributes to veterans representing Senate districts statewide. Senators conduct induction ceremonies within their respective legislative districts and at the Capitol coinciding with veterans-related observances throughout the year.

O'Mara's inductees in the Senate Veterans Hall of Fame include:

> Philip C. Smith, a highly decorated Korean War combat veteran and well-known figure in Schuyler County government and veterans' affairs;

- > J. Arthur “Archie” Kieffer, a World War II combat veteran and a widely admired fixture in Chemung County government as the Chemung County historian;
- > former Painted Post Mayor and World War II combat veteran Roswell L. “Roz” Crozier, Jr.;
- > Anthony J. “Tony” Specchio, Sr., a distinguished Korean War veteran and widely respected for his long-standing and active service to veterans and government in Watkins Glen and throughout Schuyler County;
- > P. Earle Gleason, a lifelong Yates County resident and longtime director of the Yates County Veterans’ Service Agency;
- > Warren A. Thompson, a lifelong Steuben County resident and farmer, and a stalwart in the county’s civic and veterans affairs;
- > Paul C. “Digger” Vendetti of Elmira, a World War II United States Navy veteran and longtime caretaker at Woodlawn National Cemetery;
- > Richard T. “Dick” Gillespie of Penn Yan, a veteran of World War II;
- > Dennis L. “Denny” Wolfe, Sr. of Chemung County, a well-known area Vietnam War veteran and founder of the Vietnam War Museum in Elmira;
- > Andrew Swarthout of Yates County, a highly decorated Vietnam War veteran and mainstay of local veterans’ organizations;
- > Merle John Tobias, a native of Hornell who served in the United States Army during the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and throughout the Persian Gulf War.

Other area veterans who are Hall of Fame members are Frank C. "Fritz" Pesesky, a veteran of World War II and former director of the Chemung County Veterans Service Office; William K. Kastner, a Vietnam veteran and longtime director of the Steuben County Veterans Service Agency; and Robert Laskaris, a highly decorated combat veteran and well-known figure in Chemung County veterans' affairs.