



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

## Harckham Meets with Veterans at Advisory Council Event

PETE HARCKHAM June 10, 2025

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State Sen. Pete Harckham speaking at the Veterans Advisory Council meeting

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*Somers, NY* - New York State Senator Pete Harckham met with more than 40 veterans last weekend at the Amawalk Firehouse and provided an update about recent legislation to support veterans and the state budget allocation of \$8 million funding for the Joseph P. Dwyer Veteran Peer to Peer program.

“I appreciate the veterans’ perspectives on the many issues we discussed, and look forward to continuing collaborating with them to find solutions that will benefit our veterans communities,” Harckham said. “I am glad that I was able to update them on our many accomplishments during the legislative session that will benefit veterans. We will continue to work hard to provide veterans the benefits they have earned with their courage and sacrifice.”

The special guests at the Veterans Advisory Council meeting included Joshua Gaccione, the director of the Westchester County Veterans Affairs Agency; Aaron Leonard, CEO of Guardian Revival; and Karl Rohde, director of the Putnam County Veterans Service Agency. The event was held on Saturday, June 7.

Gaccione said, “Senator Harckham is a true friend to the veterans community, and his Veterans Advisory Council is a hub of camaraderie and information in his district and throughout the Hudson Valley, connecting veterans with service providers and delivering key updates from Albany.”

Veteran Thom Newman added, “Senator Harckham has been supportive ever since he first took office and as far back as when he was a county legislator. Because of his actions, vigilance and compassion many veterans—men and women—have benefited.”

Harckham provided an update on a number of State Senate accomplishments benefiting veterans, including the allocation of \$8 million for the Joseph P Dwyer Veteran Peer to Peer Services Program in the recently adopted state budget. The program is designed to help veterans meet with other veterans in a secure, comfortable atmosphere to help each other cope with the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI).

The state senator noted other budget actions as well, such as expanding eligibility for the Gold Star Annuity payment to spouses and minor children of veterans who died on active duty, and providing \$405,000 in funding for the Legal Services of the Hudson Valley's Military Families Advocacy Project.

Harckham reported on other recently enacted Senate legislation aimed at aiding the veterans community, including a requirement that businesses help veteran-owned enterprises and other businesses; the elimination of the "wartime service" requirements for the 55-c program and civil service credit eligibility; the establishment of a veteran internship in the State Legislature; and the publication of names of veterans on housing waiting lists.

Harckham also announced the Westchester State Senate Delegation would be hosting a special ceremony in honor of Korean War Veterans on June 22, at Lasdon Park in Katonah.

"This was a good exchange of information," said Chester Edward, Board Member of the Hudson Valley Honor Flight. "Senator Harckham is willing to listen and is supportive of our needs. There is a lot more work to be done."

Harckham has hosted six Advisory Council meetings since taking office. He also hosts annual trips to Albany for veterans of the Korean and Vietnam wars, and honors an outstanding 40th Senate District veteran for inclusion in the annual New York State Senate Veterans Hall of Fame.