



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Vincent L. Leibell

## **Senator Leibell Announces Mid-Hudson Region Veteran Friendly Campuses Conference**

Vincent L. Leibell

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On April 6, 2009 the New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs presented the "Veteran Friendly Campuses" program to me and asked for my help in bringing this highly effective program to every campus in the Mid-Hudson region. In order to introduce you to this wonderful program, I have invited college and university professionals to join me for a conference on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2009 . "Veteran Friendly Campuses" raises awareness of the challenges faced by veterans in higher education and presents a practical methodology for addressing the specific issues affecting the college based veteran population.

Among the student population, veterans experience a high drop-out rate despite strong tuition assistance. This high rate of failure to retain former military can be attributed in great part to lack of a support system on campus to help veterans transition from military to student life. Many veterans experience feelings of alienation and disconnect from the rest

of the student population and they are often unaware of the full range of benefits to which they are entitled. Additionally, a majority of colleges and universities do not yet have the tools in place to effectively implement the Post 9/11 GI Bill which takes effect August 1, 2009. According to the New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs, the Veterans' Administration projects a 20% increase in the number of veterans who will use GI benefits for education in the coming academic year.

This is a small but important first step in making our campuses better for those men and women who have given so much. There will be an opportunity to meet with representatives from the New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs and to dialogue with other administrators about veteran related issues in higher education. Together, we can eradicate the obstacles facing veterans and ensure that they achieve success in our colleges and universities.

Vincent L. Leibel