



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Betty Little

## Forum Focuses Attention on Needs of Veterans Attending College

BETTY LITTLE September 28, 2009

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Senator Betty Little along with the New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs sponsored a roundtable discussion at Adirondack Community College on Friday, September 25 that focused attention on the needs of veterans attending college.

More than two dozen college officials and veterans' advocates from throughout the North Country and Vermont attended, discussing ideas to make area college campuses more veteran-friendly.

The roughly two-hour discussion included a number of topics including: suggestions for administrators on creating a veteran friendly campus; attracting veterans to local campuses; state veterans tuition benefits and the Post 9/11 GI Bill; and, other state and local resources for campus veterans.

“Today’s program is about helping local colleges understand the unique needs of veterans, the financial higher education benefits they are entitled to and, most importantly, creating an environment that best ensures their academic success,” said Senator Little.

“I, like many, am concerned that veterans as a college population have one of the highest dropout rates. We have a lot of veterans returning home and, with the new 9/11 GI Bill, many will be attending college. We heard some very good ideas today to help our veterans transfer from military life to student life.”

“As a result of the new Post 9/11 GI Bill we have already seen an increase in the number of veterans on campus,” said Brian Durant, Dean of Student Affairs at Adirondack Community College. “Going forward, we plan to take the knowledge acquired today and work with our campus community to develop and implement a long-term strategy to recruit, educate, and graduate veterans.”

“With this new benefit comes the responsibility for our schools to become more veteran-friendly, to help reduce student veteran attrition rates and foster a welcome atmosphere on campus,” said James McDonough, New York State Division of Veterans’ Affairs Director.

“With more veterans returning to campus using the Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits, schools can expect to see their student veterans’ financial needs more closely met than at any other time in recent history. In light of reported dwindling endowments, eligible veterans will walk on campus with their own financial aid package; it just makes sense for our campuses to become more veteran-friendly, given the economic incentive to do so.”

To help eligible veterans understand the Post 9/11 GI Bill, the New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs has launched an enhanced education benefits calculator and an entire page dedicated to Veterans Education on its web site. This calculator will allow eligible veterans, as well as educational institutions, to calculate the approximate value of the Post 9/11 GI Bill. This tuition calculator is also able to factor in New York State's Veterans Tuition Award (VTA). The State VTA may provide veterans using the Post 9/11 GI Bill with financial assistance to offset remaining tuition and fees.

According to information provided by the United States Department of Veterans' Affairs, schools can expect to see a 25 percent increase in the number of veterans going to school in the next two to three years.

In the coming months, members of the Legislature and the New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs will continue to host regional veteran-friendly campus forums with local college administrators to help inform schools of changes in veteran education benefits and programs. These forums will also provide college administrators with information on how their campuses can become more veteran-friendly.

The Post 9/11 GI Bill will help more than 1.8 million veterans nationwide who served since September 11, 2001. Veterans interested in applying for the Post 9/11 GI Bill are encouraged to apply online at the United State Department of Veterans' Affairs application center at <http://vabenefits.vba.gov/vonapp/main.asp> or by locating or calling the nearest New York State Veterans Counselor at [http://www.veterans.ny.gov/counselor\\_location.html](http://www.veterans.ny.gov/counselor_location.html) or by calling 1-888-VETSNYS (1-888-838-7697).

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