



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George Winner

Veterans Day

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America observes this year's Veterans Day with her troops still engaged in the war against terror and at a time when the world's political stage is embroiled in uncertainty and instability.

It truly is a momentous and dangerous time in world history, and so our annual tribute to America's veterans takes on many shades of deeper meaning, especially falling as it does today in the shadow of the tragedy at Fort Hood, Texas. I know that I speak for all of us throughout our region when I say that our thoughts, our prayers, and our deepest sympathies continue to be extended to the victims, their fellow soldiers, and their families and friends.

American history, in so many ways, is defined by the American military. So we honor the sacrifices and the victories of our veterans each and every Veterans Day.

And since the tragic events of September 11, 2001 we have realized, all too painfully, that our freedom here at home can be threatened at any moment. We realize, as well, that our troops will always stand ready to protect us yet again. The freedoms we cherish have been hard-won by the servicemen and women of previous generations, and by those of this generation who continue to serve.

We're grateful to each and every one of them.

Sacrifice is the truth that we remember on Veterans Day. We pause in our daily lives to salute the brave men and women -- America's veterans -- who fought the wars that have made the United States the greatest nation on earth. This year our attention also turns to the men and women who have been called upon once again to defend our nation and who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the name of worldwide freedom.

One way that New York government seeks to constantly honor the service of our veterans has been through the creation of state agencies and legislative committees devoted to the development and administration of programs and services that seek to address the many challenges facing today's veterans in areas such as health care, employment, and education.

For example, the [New York State Division of Veterans Affairs](#) was established in 1945 to assist veterans, members of the armed forces, their families and their dependents. Since then, the division -- in concert with its offices in counties locally and across New York -- has strongly advocated for New York's millions of veterans and veterans' issues at the local, state and federal levels. It's a proud history of service.

In addition to the division, each house of the state Legislature has established a veterans committee dedicated to these affairs. In the Senate, the Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs Committee concentrates each and every legislative session to identify and formulate legislative responses at the state level to the challenges confronting our veterans.

In 2006, the [National Purple Heart Hall of Honor](#) was established in New York's historic Hudson Valley and stands today as an appropriate and meaningful addition to our state's rich military history.

The observance of Veterans Day is a very appropriate and meaningful way that we, as American citizens, collectively show our support for our troops -- past, present, and future.

It's an occasion to remember that the lives of our veterans, as President Obama reminded the nation during yesterday's memorial service at Fort Hood, "speak to the strengths, the dignity and the decency of those who serve."