



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David J. Valesky

Sen. Valesky Proposes Bill to Encourage More Fishing-based Rehabilitation Events for Veterans

David J. Valesky

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SYRACUSE, N.Y.—State Senator David J. Valesky (D-Oneida) has introduced legislation (S.7041) that would encourage more fishing events that provide physical and emotional rehabilitation for veterans or active duty members of the armed forces.

“Providing our veterans and active duty personnel, who have sacrificed bravely for our country, with more opportunities to learn the rehabilitative nature of fishing is a small way of saying thank you,” Senator Valesky said.

State law currently allows the State Department of Environmental Conservation to designate and host up to four free fishing events per year in each region, where all non-licensed residents can learn about fishing. The purpose of these events, like DEC's Free Fishing Day Clinics, are generally to promote recreational fishing to the general public. The current law, however, makes no distinction or special exception to allow still more rehabilitative events for veterans.

Senator Valesky's legislation would change this by specifically allowing the DEC to designate additional free fishing events for veterans and active duty personnel. Designation as an official event would allow veterans and military personnel to participate whether or not they currently have a fishing license.

In our region and across the country, events like this that introduce veterans to fishing's rehabilitative effects, promoted by organizations like Project Healing Waters, have met been with broad approval by veterans groups.

"When the Region 7 Fish and Wildlife Management Board (FWMB) realized Project Healing Waters was having difficulty gaining access to the Salmon River for an event, because some wounded war veterans lacked a one-day fishing license, the nine-county board unanimously agreed to do our part," Jim Petreszyn, Region 7 FWMB Sportsmen's Representative, said. "As we often do, we contacted Senators Valesky and Aubertine for their help finding a solution to the problem, which lead to this proposed legislation. It's not often we have the opportunity to positively impact a person's life, especially a person who has given so much."

"Our veterans and armed service members give so much to our country, it's only appropriate we take this opportunity to give back by opening new access to an essential part of our way of life in Central and Northern New York," said Sen. Darrel Aubertine (D-Cape Vincent), the bill's co-sponsor, who represents Oswego, Jefferson and St. Lawrence counties. "It's a small token of appreciation, but it fits with the mission of groups such as Project Healing Waters which use the simple joy of fishing to help wounded veterans."

"Fishing, whether fishing for bass on Oneida Lake or fly-fishing for Trout on Butternut Creek, can be therapeutic both physically and mentally for veterans," said Senator Valesky. "Our veterans and military service personnel deserve more of these opportunities, and we should do everything we can on the state level to help make that possible."

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