



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brian X. Foley

## Senator Foley Supports Our Veterans

Brian X. Foley

June 13, 2010

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Senator Brian X. Foley (D - Blue Point) announced today that a legislative package has passed the senate which will expand benefits available to both veterans and service members serving on active duty. The legislative package, which consisted of eleven bills, covers the areas of health and well-being, housing assistance, matrimonial law, tax relief, voting protection and educational opportunity.

The legislative package includes legislation sponsored by Senator Foley that would permit a veteran to transfer the property tax exemption on his or her primary residence to a new primary residence when moving within the same county. It will allow veterans who are moving within the same jurisdiction to do so without worrying about whether or not they will be able to keep this benefit. Currently, veterans may only retain their exemption when moving within the same city, town or village.

“The men and women of our armed forces sacrifice for us on a daily basis and we owe it to them to make sure they are afforded all of the protections we can extend to them,” said Senator Foley. “The legislation that we have passed this session will go a long way to relieving the burden on our veterans and increasing the recreational, educational and training available to them. I am particularly proud to have been able to pass legislation that will allow veterans to retain their property tax exemptions when moving within the same county. This new policy will provide veterans with the ability to move without worrying about losing an exemption that can make a large impact in homeownership. This session’s veterans’ legislation is a continuation of what we have been working on over the last year and a half and is, by no means, an end to the work we intend to continue to do to make the lives of our veterans and active duty service members easier.”

The health and welfare portion of the legislation includes the establishment of a New York State Interagency Coordinating Council for Service-Disabled Veterans. The function of the council would be to promote the implementation of a comprehensive statewide program of coordinated services for service-disabled veterans, including educational training, health, employment, housing options, transportation options, personal care and family outreach. It also allows the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to hold organized fishing events to provide physical and emotional rehabilitation for current and former members of the armed forces, without requiring a fishing license for participation. Further, the legislation extends the time limitation for bringing a claim for injury or death caused by exposure to phenoxy herbicides, including Agent Orange, for persons serving in the armed forces in Indo China from February 28, 1961 to May 7, 1975. Veterans who were exposed to these substances will now have until June 16, 2012 to avail themselves of the courts.

The legislation establishes a new income limit for the Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) program for disabled veterans. The new limit will be similar to the income limit currently used by the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) program and will allow more disabled veterans to qualify for the program. It also ensures that all veterans who served in the armed forces during a time of war would receive a preference for Mitchell Lama housing. This is a shift from the current policy of allowing only those veterans who served between 1961 and 1975 to receive such a preference.

In addition to Senator Foley’s legislation allowing veterans to retain property tax exemptions when moving within the same county, two other pieces of legislation

were passed as part of the veterans' package involving property taxes. A bill sponsored by Senator Sampson would allow localities to grant property tax exemptions to reservists who are serving on active duty for at least ninety consecutive days within the immediately preceding calendar year. This would provide reservists who are protecting our country added peace of mind so that they can focus on their duties. The second piece of legislation allows for an additional property tax exemption when two qualified veterans live in the same household. Currently, the exemption is available to only one veteran. Allowing each veteran to receive an exemption will properly recognize the service of both veterans.

The legislative package includes a bill that would expand educational opportunities for veterans. If signed into law, anyone who has served in the military and been honorably discharged will be able to audit courses at the State University of New York (SUNY) and the City University of New York (CUNY) at no charge. This will allow veterans to pursue additional education without incurring the cost.

The final pieces of legislation involve additional protections for service members serving on active duty. The first allows military personnel who are scheduled for deployment in less than sixty days to marry within twenty-four hours of receiving a marriage license. In recent years, the notification period for deployments has often been drastically shortened from previous time periods. This legislation will make it easier for members of the armed forces to get their affairs in order prior to deploying. The second bill will promote the timely receipt of military and special federal ballots, including the adoption of provisions required by federal law related to absentee ballots. This will protect the fundamental right to vote for those men and women who are serving overseas to secure our rights.