



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Lee M. Zeldin

State Senator Lee M. Zeldin Holds First Meeting of Blue Ribbon “John P. Jennings Veterans’ Advisory Panel”

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Patchogue, NY- State Senator Lee M. Zeldin (R, C, I- Shirley) (Above, Center) held his first meeting of the Blue Ribbon “John P. Jennings Veterans’ Advisory Panel” today at St. Josephs College in Patchogue.

The panel included dozens of veterans, members of veterans’ organizations and experts in the field of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

“One of the primary objectives of the advisory panel will be to help design the PFC Joseph Dwyer Program (JDP), which I proposed during last year’s campaign. Many military veterans in New York State need assistance with diagnosis and treatment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). The National Institute of Mental Health defines PTSD as ‘an anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal in which grave physical harm occurred or was threatened. Traumatic events that may trigger PTSD include violent personal assaults, natural or human-caused disasters, accidents, or military combat’,” said Zeldin.

The panel is named in honor of Infantryman John P. Jennings, a Suffolk County resident who passed on January 10, 2011. John long struggled with the effects of PTSD following a deployment to Iraq from September 2004 to October 2005. Zeldin recently presented Jennings’ family with the New York State Liberty Medal, the highest award given by the New York State Senate for citizenry.

PFC Dwyer enlisted in the Army within days of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. He served with courage and honor in Iraq, but returned home with PTSD. On June 28, 2008, this illness took his life, leaving his wife, Matina, and their two year old daughter, Meagan, to live the remainder of their lives without him.

The PFC Joseph Dwyer Program would be a statewide multi level initiative to assist service members, their families and friends, with the challenges of diagnosis and treatment of PTSD and TBI.

Zeldin is a member of several Senate committees to be impacted by the initiatives designed by the Jennings Panel. These include the Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs Committee, Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Committee and the Aging Committee.

“It was a great first meeting,” said Senator Zeldin.

“We had an extremely productive discussion on ideas to help our veterans when they return from serving overseas. Additionally, we had a lengthy discussion on the diagnosis and treatment of PTSD and TBI and how we can turn these ideas into legislation to enact The PFC Joseph Dwyer Program,” continued Zeldin.

“Over 25 members of the veterans’ community met for the first time today as Senator Zeldin’s Veterans’ Advisory Panel. The members are uniquely diversified and are from established veterans’ groups and organizers for veterans benefits. I look forward to our next meeting in August,” said L.W. Murphy, a veteran from Blue Point who was appointed as the Panel’s Chairman.

Senator Zeldin expects the panel to meet several more times over the next six months, to help him finalize a draft for introduction by the beginning of next legislative session.