



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

## Senator Kennedy Presents State Honors to Cheektowaga Veteran, Helps Connect Local Veterans to Support Resources at Outreach Event

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY April 20, 2012

| ISSUE: **MILITARY AFFAIRS, VETERANS**



*Senator awards, posthumously, New York State Medal for Merit to Cheektowaga man who earned recognition in World War II but did not receive medal prior to passing*

CHEEKTOWAGA, N.Y. – Senator Timothy M. Kennedy, D-58th District, held an event Friday to help connect Veterans to the services and support they earned while serving our great nation. Over 200 Veterans visited Cheektowaga's Pvt. Leonard Post V.F.W. Post to attend

Senator Kennedy's Veterans Outreach Fair and learn more about resources available to them.

At the event, Senator Kennedy presented the New York State Medal for Merit, posthumously, to Lothar Eric Schessl, a Cheektowaga man who earned the recognition while serving in World War II. Unfortunately, Mr. Schessl did not receive his medal prior to passing. His wife, Theresa Schessl, accepted the award on his behalf.

Senator Kennedy pressed the N.Y. State [Division of Military and Naval Affairs](#) to release the medals in time for a Memorial Service – which Mrs. Schessel is holding for her husband this weekend. The state responded by ensuring the medals arrived quickly.

“New York State is proud to honor the brave men and women who have served in the Armed Forces,” said Senator Kennedy. “Mr. Schessl made great sacrifices in service to our nation. It's unfortunate he was not awarded this recognition while he was still with us, but now that we have secured his New York State Medal for Merit, his family will fully understand the gratitude and respect our state has for Mr. Schessl and all Veterans.”

Born on September 19, 1927, Schessl served as a Merchant Marine at 17 years old. A year later, he enlisted as a Seaman Second Class in the U.S. Navy in the midst of World War II. Wounded in service, Schessl was awarded the Mariner's Medal, which is awarded to a seaman wounded while serving on a warship. He also received the Merchant Marine Combat Bar, which is awarded to members of the Merchant Marines who served on a ship attacked by an enemy of war. Now decades later, Schessl has finally been presented with the New York State Medal for Merit he earned in combat.

“Many Veterans may not be aware of their eligibility for [state honors in recognition of distinguished service to our nation](#),” said Senator Kennedy. “Your sacrifices and

achievements may have earned state recognitions, such as the [Medal for Merit](#) or the [Conspicuous Service Cross](#). If you have been awarded high distinctions for your service, please let us know and we can help you gain access to state honors you may have earned.”

Over 30 agencies and organizations participated in the Outreach event. The Veterans Outreach Fair was a one-stop information and services center where Veterans were able to learn more about federal resources and state services, employment opportunities, how to start a business or career and much more. Participating agencies ranged from the VA of WNY to the Buffalo Employment & Training Center to Local Colleges’ Veterans Service Agencies. Resources available covered topics such as civic engagement, health and wellness, employment opportunities and continuing education.

Expert speakers shared experiences of post-service life and helped connect Veterans to the support services that were critical in their personal stories. Patrick Welch of Daemen College, Beth Henry of the VA of WNY, Donald Miller of the state Department of Labor and Sergio Rodriguez of Medaille College addressed various areas of expertise.

Senator Kennedy also discussed legislative initiatives on Veterans issues – focusing on three issues where he feels the state can do better: jobs for Veterans, making post-service life more affordable and improving Veterans’ health.

Kennedy highlighted the need for further incentives to spur the hiring of unemployed Veterans and called for the state to make it easier for Veterans to gain access to civil service employment opportunities. He outlined proposals to help Veterans afford to stay in their homes by expanding property tax exemption programs. Kennedy is also pushing for legislation to ensure mental healthcare providers are fully trained to diagnose and treat the growing number of Veterans experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and other combat-related mental illnesses.

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*Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate's 58th District, which is comprised of the towns of Cheektowaga, Eden, Hamburg and West Seneca, the city of Lackawanna and parts of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.*