



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Dean G. Skelos

## Senate Celebrates West Point Day at the Capitol

DEAN G. SKELOS April 26, 2012

### *Legislation Would Help Veterans Get Jobs*

The New York State Senate today welcomed cadets and staff from the United States Military Academy at West Point as part of an annual day of recognition. In honor of the celebration, the Senate passed several bills focusing on helping veterans obtain jobs and protect their rights.

West Point Day provides an opportunity for the Legislature to meet distinguished cadets and officers from the Military Academy and show appreciation for their service. The historic educational institution perched on the Hudson River is a source of tremendous pride for New Yorkers, and its graduates have gone on to become presidents and our nation's top military leaders. The Senate adopted a resolution recognizing West Point's contributions to our state and nation and acted on legislation focused on veterans' issues.

Senate Majority Leader Dean G. Skelos said, "We are so fortunate to have a renowned institution like West Point here in New York. As we meet the cadets, we are reminded of the courage they and those who came before them have demonstrated to keep our country free. In recognition of the sacrifices of our veterans and active duty military, the Senate approved legislation today that provides valuable assistance here at home."

A bill (S.4262) sponsored by Senator Lee Zeldin (R-C-I, Shirley) allows veterans who have received combat decorations to be provided with additional credit towards civil service employment was passed by the Senate today. This would reward those who acted bravely as they seek to reenter the job market.

“Freedom is not free and New York can further recognize the great sacrifice of our military veterans by helping them re-integrate into civilian life through the creation of employment opportunities,” said Senator Zeldin. “If an American is willing to lay down their life in protection of our Constitution, freedoms and liberties, these brave volunteers deserve to be protected during, and after, military service. This legislation provides employment opportunities for combat veterans who were exposed to great risk and danger. I am honored to part of this coordinated effort to say thank you through more than just words, but also very deliberate and effective action.”

Two other pieces of legislation passed today also seek to provide veterans with additional credit towards civil service exams. Legislation (S.1311) sponsored by Senator Kenneth LaValle (R-C-I, Port Jefferson) allows veterans to receive additional civil service credit if they become classified as a veteran with a disability after taking the exam. Legislation (S.3406) sponsored by Senator William Larkin (R-C, Cornwall-on-Hudson) allows qualified veterans to add veterans' credits to civil service competitive examination scores at any point prior to the expiration of the eligible list, including those examinations for appointments and promotions to the state police.

“Today’s legislation is our way of thanking our veterans for their service on behalf of our country,” said Senator Larkin. “It will allow eligible veterans to receive the civil service exam credit they are entitled to and assist them in their employment efforts upon returning to civilian life.”

A bill (S.2421) sponsored by Senator Greg Ball (R-C, Pawling) would protect voting rights by requiring the absentee or military ballots of any active duty service member be counted even if the service member dies before the date of the election for which it was cast.

Senator Ball said, "There is no closer bond than a parent and their child. Each of these Cadets will soon lead young men and women from all corners of the country and our trust as a nation and the trust of parents around the country will soon be squarely on their shoulders. Days after graduating they will be entrusted with the health and welfare of dozens of other young men and women and we are proud to know that such a great trust, placed in these young hands, is well placed. West Point, like all the service academies, represents the best of America. Cadets come in from every sector of American life, every religion, every race and every region. They share every challenging day from that day forward, their hair is shaved, and their uniforms are the same. From the very day they walk through the door they are simply judged upon the content of their character and their ability. West Point represents the very essence of American upward mobility and opportunity. To the Cadets here today, please enjoy every moment and know that we are all very proud of you."

The bills will be sent to the Assembly, except for S.1311, a constitutional amendment, which has passed the Assembly and must be passed again by the next Legislature before it can go before voters for approval.