



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

Veterans

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR May 29, 2012

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On Monday, New Yorkers all over the State celebrated and honored our veterans. 140 years ago, on this Memorial Day, we began honoring the brave men and women who put life and limb on the line for their brothers and sisters across the country and the state. It's the most valiant of sacrifices.

Our veterans, should be the object of our admiration and appreciation for their dedication and determination. Then why is it that New York remains in the top 10 states for veterans' unemployment rates? At 15.2% in 2011, veterans are unemployed at a rate almost double that of the already high statewide unemployment level, especially among post-9/11 veterans under the age of 25.

We, as elected officials, as voices in the community, as friends, family and neighbors, as citizens... we, as a community, must do better for our veterans.

There are some resources out there and I'm proud to say that as the Ranking Member of the Senate's Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs committee, I have been a part of the advocacy for and passage of some crucial legislation aiding veterans. Only a year ago, we passed a package of bills in honor of Memorial Day last year that, among other things, would ensure military-family privacies, the entitlement of additional benefits, an expansion of recreational activities with fewer restrictions, and support in custodial matters. To honor Memorial Day this year, I was honored to be able to build on last year's advances and vote for legislation to honor the sacrifices of New York's servicemen and women who have lost their lives fighting to protect our country. I have sponsored bills that give tax credits to businesses that hire veterans.

However, only part of public service happens in the Capitol; now I want to bring this effort home. On Friday, June 8th, I'm hosting, along with Assemblyman Mike Miller, a Veterans and Spouses Job Fair. A lot of governmental initiatives begin and end in seemingly endless paperwork and web sites that might not be available. It's a system set up to keep those who need to use it out. This job fair is a first step in what I see as a necessary on-the-ground effort to employ our veterans. The event is free and will be attended by employers looking to hire candidates in the fields of finance, healthcare, retail, sales, social services, transportation and logistics, trades, information technology and more.

Additionally, a major hindrance plaguing veterans' attempts at employment is a lack of accessible and affordable training. On November 21st, 2011, President Obama signed into law the VOW to Hire Heroes Act, a Federal piece of legislation that, through several sub-initiatives, aims to help veterans back to work. Among its goals, the new law works to address the need for help for veterans in transferring over their experience from their service to job opportunities here in New York. I'm hopeful that this program will be helpful, but we must do more locally. Training opportunities will be available at my veteran's job fair, as well.

Every year I sponsor a Veterans BBQ and there I get the opportunity to speak with our service men and women. At that event, I take away an experience, a story, an emotion, that I've never experienced before. But almost every story and emotion given there has the same thread: struggle. In these tough economic times, everyone is feeling pinched and everyone is bearing some of the brunt, but with more and more men and women coming home and adding to our veteran population, we must make their employment and ability to provide for their families a little easier to obtain. After all, they are the ones who have fought to protect all of the rights and freedoms we enjoy here every day.

Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. is the State Senator for the 15th District, representing in whole or in part, the Queens neighborhoods of Howard Beach, Hamilton Beach, Kew Gardens, Ozone Park, Woodhaven, South Ozone Park, Richmond Hill, Glendale, Middle Village, Ridgewood, Maspeth, Sunnyside, Woodside, Elmhurst, Forest Hills and Rego Park.