



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Lee M. Zeldin

## Zeldin Announces Expansion of Pfc Joseph Dwyer Ptsd Peer-to-Peer Veterans Counseling Program in State Budget

LEE M. ZELDIN March 27, 2013

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Senator Lee M. Zeldin (R-C-I, Shirley) today announced funding for the continuation and expansion of the PFC Joseph Dwyer PTSD Peer-to-Peer Veterans Counseling program in the just passed 2013-14 state budget.

A top priority for Senator Zeldin since first being elected, the Dwyer Program provides “peer-to-peer” counseling between veterans who personally understand the effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Since its inception in

last year's budget, the program has been operating successfully in four test counties: Suffolk, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Jefferson. At Senator Zeldin's request, this innovative direct counseling program will now be funded again for Suffolk County veterans, those in the other test counties, as well as for veterans in seven additional counties: Nassau, Erie, Onondaga, Orange, Putnam, Rockland and Westchester.

"This is a huge a win for our veterans," said Senator Zeldin, a Major in the U.S. Army Reserves. "Countless veterans have already benefitted from this excellent program and now even more will have access to this service. I want to thank all of my Senate colleagues who joined me in the fight to ensure that this critical funding was included in this year's state budget. Their support was instrumental in this effort and will greatly assist our troops who have served our country honorably and are now struggling to make the adjustment back into day-to-day life."

Senate Republican Leader Dean G. Skelos (R, Rockville Centre) said, "As New York's veterans worked courageously to protect our freedom, many have faced physical and mental traumas that will last with them long after they return home. The expansion of the PFC Joseph Dwyer PTSD Peer-to-Peer Counseling Program will provide an outlet for Nassau's veterans to share their experience and facilitate healing so that our bravest service members can receive the understanding and care they deserve."

Independent Democratic Conference Leader Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester) said, "Since its inception, the PFC Joseph Dwyer PTSD Peer-to-Peer Veterans Counseling program has proven extraordinarily effective at providing top-notch care for our state's returning heroes. These brave men and women deserve innovative, fully-funded treatment initiatives that provide the type of attention, care, and results that the Dwyer program is already producing. I'm pleased that this budget package expands this great program into Westchester County, where I personally know dozens of veterans who will make good use of this program's resources."

"We must ensure that our veterans are afforded every opportunity to succeed and grow upon returning from defending our nation," said Senator Kenneth P. LaValle (R-C-I, Port Jefferson). "They did their job overseas, now we must do ours by providing them with the services they need here at home."

Senator David Carlucci (D-Rockland), Chairman of the Senate's Mental Health Committee, said, "When it comes to treating veterans with PTSD, it's clear that we need to continue investing in novel approaches that deliver positive results. The PFC Joseph Dwyer PTSD Peer-to-Peer Veterans Counseling program is exactly that type of initiative. By providing counseling services from a brother or sister in arms, the Dwyer program breaks down

barriers between counselor and patient and provides the type of care that many veterans truly need. I'm pleased that we're bringing this program to Rockland County, where I know that many of the region's veterans and families will benefit."

"I'm pleased that the Joseph Dwyer PTSD Peer-to-Peer Veterans Counseling Program will be expanded into Nassau County," said Senator Kemp Hannon (R-Nassau). "There are thousands of returning veterans who suffer from PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury, and they deserve no less than our full attention, care and support. I thank Senator Zeldin for his efforts, and join with him in expressing our commitment to providing our servicemen and women with the support services they need to readjust to civilian life back home."

"Our brave veterans have sacrificed their families and lives to protect our freedoms," said Senator John Flanagan (R-C-I, East Northport). "We owe them a debt of gratitude and support upon their return from serving this great country. I want to thank Senator Zeldin for his constant efforts on behalf of all New York veterans, and join him in supporting the continuation and expansion of this critically important peer counseling program. The program has already proven to be a great success for so many Suffolk County veterans by easing their transition from military to civilian life. Now the program will be available to even more of our military heroes throughout New York State."

"Our veterans put everything on the line to protect our freedom and defend our Nation. We owe it to them to provide the best services and support programs when they come home. I am pleased that our Nassau and Suffolk County veterans will have access to the PFC Joseph Dwyer PTSD Peer-to-Peer Veterans Counseling Program. As these veterans struggle to adjust to life back at home, we will stand with them, honor their sacrifice and help them heal," said Senator Carl L. Marcellino (R-Syosset).

"Expanding the Dwyer program will help ensure that veterans affected by PTSD and traumatic brain injury will have greater access to the care they need. Our troops bravely risk their lives on the battlefield to protect us. Their lives should not be at risk again because they could not get the necessary care when they return home. This is an innovative and invaluable service which will now be able to help even more of our American heroes in their time of need," said Senator Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr. (R-Merrick).

"When our men and women return home, unfortunately they bring with them the lasting effects of combat including traumatic brain injury. Peer counseling has been successful in helping ease their transition into their communities as they come home. I fully support not only continuing the program, but expanding it. Our veterans deserve nothing less," said Senator Jack M. Martins (R-C-I, Mineola).

Senator Phil Boyle (R-C-I, Bay Shore) said, "Combat Veterans have given our great nation their dedicated service to protect our freedom. By providing continued funding for the Joseph Dwyer Veterans Counseling Program, I hope that New York State can make a small payment on the immeasurable debt we owe them for their sacrifices."

Senator David Valesky (D-Onondaga/Oneida) said, "I'm pleased that this year's budget package addresses the needs of veterans statewide, by funding extraordinary and proven programs such as the PFC Joseph Dwyer PTSD Peer-to-Peer Veterans Counseling initiative. When our country's bravest men and women return home, I think it's incumbent upon us as legislators to provide them with the best possible mental health resources. Expanding this program into Onondaga County will help countless veterans and their families overcome the hardships that come with a condition as serious as PTSD. That's why I'm proud to support it."

"This past Tuesday, March 19, marked the 10-year anniversary of Operation Iraqi Freedom and was a solemn reminder of the countless personal sacrifices America's veterans have made, and continue making, in the preservation of liberty and the defense of our nation. With thousands of veterans suffering from the effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), we have a moral obligation to help New York's heroes overcome these serious challenges. One of my top legislative priorities this year has been a continuation, and expansion, of the PFC Joseph Dwyer PTSD Peer-to-Peer Veterans Counseling Program in the 2013-14 State Budget so we can help all of our veterans receive the care and services they need. I am proud to have been part of the successful effort to maintain and increase this necessary funding. The PFC Joseph Dwyer PTSD Peer-to-Peer Veterans Counseling Program has already made a positive difference for Rensselaer and Saratoga veterans and its expansion into more counties will further assist New York's veterans and their families affected by PTSD and TBI. The men and women of our armed forces have made the world a safer and better place. Our words of thanks are not enough – we need to match our words with a sustained commitment of funding for veterans support services that I was honored to help secure," said Senator Kathleen A. Marchione (R,C-Halfmoon).

"Our veterans make so many sacrifices to defend our country and our freedom," said Senator Patty Ritchie (R-C Heuvelton). "Because they have given so much, it's imperative to have resources available that will enable them to cope with the transition into civilian life. The PFC Joseph Dwyer Peer Support Program has already been a tremendous success in Jefferson County and has been an exceptional asset given our close proximity to Ft. Drum and the tens of thousands soldiers and veterans who call our region 'home'. I am thrilled to see that it will be able to continue and expand to provide a much-needed service to our brave veterans."

"With the rising number of returning veterans suffering from ailments like traumatic brain injury, we must do everything in our power to give our returning troops the services and programs that they need," said Senator Greg Ball, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs. "The expansion of the Dwyer program to Putnam, Westchester and five other counties in the state will allow even more veterans to receive these services to help them transition back into civilian life."

Senator Bill Larkin (R-C-I, Cornwall-on-Hudson) said, "The PFC Joseph Dwyer PTSD Peer-to-Peer Counseling Program is an outstanding resource for our veterans and I am pleased that it will now be expanded to Orange County. It means so much to our veterans, particularly returning veterans, to be able to speak with someone who has been through what they have been through and who can provide timely counseling and assistance when they need it the most. This program does just that and I am grateful that additional veterans will have access to these valuable services."

Senator Mark J. Grisanti (R,I-60) said, "Since the founding of this great country, our veterans have been the backbone for our freedoms. In this day, we now know more about the physical and especially the mental toll serving in our Armed Forces has on the individual. When our veterans return home we need programs like the PFC Joseph Dwyer PTSD Peer to Peer Counseling Program set up in our counties to ensure that every veteran who needs access to help has that access as readily available as possible."

Senator Michael H. Ranzenhofer (R-C-I, Amherst) said, "We know that many of our returning service members can experience nightmares, flashbacks, difficulty sleeping, and feeling detached when they come home and try to go back to their previous routines and lives. Now that the PFC Joseph Dwyer PTSD Peer-to-Peer Counseling Program has been enacted as part of the 2013-14 State Budget, these veterans will be provided with a way to discuss day-to-day problems with other veterans who have been through the same kind of trauma. It gives veterans a sense of connection to other people again and helps them cope with difficult memories. It will now be an added resource for any veteran in Erie County who wishes to use it."

"We are learning more and more every day; that for the brave men and women who serve this country, the battle doesn't end when they return home to American soil. For many, the psychological and emotional impacts of war have long lasting and devastating effects on their mental health and their ability to lead well-adjusted lives. The PFC Joseph Dwyer PTSD Peer-to-Peer Counseling Program has made great strides for New York's veterans dealing with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and I am excited to see this valuable program expanded to Western New York and across the state," said Senator Patrick M. Gallivan (R-C-I, Elma).

Federal Veterans Administration statistics show that up to 20 percent of Iraq and Afghan war veterans, 10 percent of Gulf War (Desert Storm), and 30 percent of Vietnam veterans experience PTSD.