



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Lee M. Zeldin

Senator Republican Leader Skelos, and Senators Zeldin, Fuschillo, Martins, Marcellino, and Hannon, and Nassau County Executive Mangano Announce the Nassau County PFC Joseph Dwyer PTSD Peer-to-Peer Veterans Counseling program

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April 25, 2013

ISSUE:

- [Military Affairs](#)
- [Military](#)
- [Troops](#)
- [Veterans](#)

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Senator Lee M. Zeldin (R-C-I, Shirley) today joined Senate Republican Leader Dean Skelos, and Senators Chuck Fuschillo, Jack Martins, Carl Marcellino, and Kemp Hannon, as well as Nassau County Executive Ed Mangano, to announce funding for the expansion of the PFC Joseph Dwyer PTSD Peer-to-Peer Veterans Counseling program to Nassau County. The continuation and expansion of the PFC Joseph Dwyer PTSD Peer-to-Peer Veterans Counseling program was approved as part of the 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 pilot 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.”

“I thank our State Senators for their commitment to the health and well-being of the roughly 85,000 veterans of all generations living in Nassau County. The expansion of the PTSD Peer-to-Peer Veterans Counseling Program to Nassau County is a critical resource for our community and continues to demonstrate our commitment to our Hometown Heroes,” said Nassau County Executive Edward Mangano.

“Expanding the Dwyer program to Nassau County will give local veterans affected by PTSD and traumatic brain injury greater access to the care they need. These brave men and women risked their lives on the battlefield to protect us. Their lives should not be at risk again because the necessary care was not available when they returned 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).

"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 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).

Nassau County Veterans Service Agency Deputy Director Scott Castillo said: "As a former Special Operations Soldier with combat deployments in Iraq , Afghanistan and other theaters, I truly recognize the crucial goals the Nassau County PFC Joseph Dwyer PTSD Peer-to-Peer Veterans Counseling program strives to achieve . This is a Godsend for all returning veterans. Everyone who has served in our Armed Forces understand that the physical wounds sustained on the battlefield can sometimes pale in comparison to the deep and lasting emotional wounds to our souls. This program should be a model not only for New York Veterans but for all organizations that provide Veterans support services across our nation. Our heroes deserve no less."

The PFC Joseph Dwyer PTSD Peer-to-Peer Veterans Counseling program will be administered in Nassau County by the Nassau County Mental Health Association and the Nassau County Veterans Department.