



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Gustavo Rivera

## Senator Rivera's VetConnect Bill Passes in the Senate

GUSTAVO RIVERA June 20, 2013

| ISSUE: **VETERANS**

(Albany, NY) - Today, Senator Gustavo Rivera's (D-Bronx) bill S2226, also known as VetConnect, passed in the Senate. The bill will enable veterans to receive benefits information upon applying for or renewing a driver's license.

Veterans' service to our country entitles them to receive a spectrum of benefits ranging from medical treatment to vocational training to home loan programs. Unfortunately, 59 percent of veterans have little or no understanding of the benefits available to them, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs 2010 National Survey of Veterans.

At no cost to taxpayers, VetConnect would utilize the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) as an intake point to gather information on veterans not currently in the state system. Modeled off a policy initiative at the Florida Department of Veteran Affairs, the DMV would collect, store, and make this information available to the Division of Veteran Affairs (DVA) so that they will be able to identify veterans and educate them about the benefits to which they may be entitled.

"Veterans deserve to be made fully aware of the benefits they are entitled to for serving our nation and fighting to protect all Americans," said Senator Gustavo Rivera. "I am happy to announce that today we are one step closer to having VetConnect become law which will

help make it easier for New York veterans to gain access to the services they both need and deserve."

The VetConnect bill, which is sponsored by Assemblymember Dinowitz in the New York State Assembly, now needs to pass in the Assembly and be signed by Governor Cuomo to become law.

"The men and women who have served our State and Country in our armed forces deserve every benefit allowed to them. This bill would make it easier for them to become aware of the services that our state provides to them," said Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz (D-Bronx). "I will continue working with my colleagues in the Assembly to see this bill signed into law. We should be doing all we can to enhance the lives of our veterans who have done so much for us all."