



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR
Jack M. Martins

Senator Martins, Assemblywoman Schimel Announce Veterans Bill Signed Into Law

JACK M. MARTINS August 12, 2013

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Measure Will Enhance Veterans' Access to Benefits and Care

State Senator Jack M. Martins and Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel were joined today by members of local veterans' organizations to announce that veterans legislation they sponsored (S.5825/A.6221-C) was recently signed into law. In an effort to improve the benefit claims process for New York's veterans, the law requires that directors of city and county veterans service agencies become accredited as veterans' service organization (VSO) representatives.

In New York State, approximately forty percent of directors of local veterans service agencies are not accredited VSO representatives. This is problematic because only individuals bearing this accreditation have access to pertinent data from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. This information is needed to process benefit claims. Agency heads without this accreditation cannot effectively supervise personnel who process claims and are unable to review claims that come before them.

“This law will provide veterans throughout the state with a go to person for help getting the benefits they're entitled to,” said Senator Jack Martins (R-C-I, Mineola). “In order to better serve New York's veterans and their families and help them get the state and the federal benefits to which they are entitled, it makes sense for the directors of our VAs across the State to be accredited. This legislation will do just that and increase the number of knowledgeable, trusted, accredited agents who can serve our veterans. I want to thank Assemblywoman Schimel for her work on this important measure and the Governor for signing this bill into law.”

Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel, a member of the Assembly's Veterans Affairs Committee, said, “It is crucial that we, in government, ensure that those who have risked their lives defending our nation are cared for once they return to civilian life. This law will ensure that veterans and their families receive the benefits to which they are entitled to in a more efficient and timely manner. I thank the Governor for realizing the importance of this measure, Senator Martins for carrying the bill in the Senate, and Andy Booth of the Nassau County American Legion for helping me advance this important legislation.”

The new law, which becomes effective August 30th, requires current directors of local veterans agencies to become accredited within three years. Those hired after the effective date have eighteen months to become an accredited VSO representative.

This issue was brought to Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel's attention by Andrew Booth, Co-Chair of the Nassau County American Legion's Legislative Committee. “On behalf of the veterans of New York State, the Nassau County American Legion thanks Assemblywoman Schimel and Senator Martins for their advocacy on this important legislation, which will help speed up the work that is required for veterans to receive their state and federal benefits,” said Booth.

“From a mental health standpoint, this new law will bring tremendous relief and help clear up the obstacles and sometimes confusing paperwork veterans face when trying to secure

their benefits,” said John Javis, Chair of the Veterans Health Alliance of Long Island. “It is especially important when a physically or emotionally wounded veteran is being discharged home and needs services and benefits quickly. This new law will help speed up that process for them.”