

NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

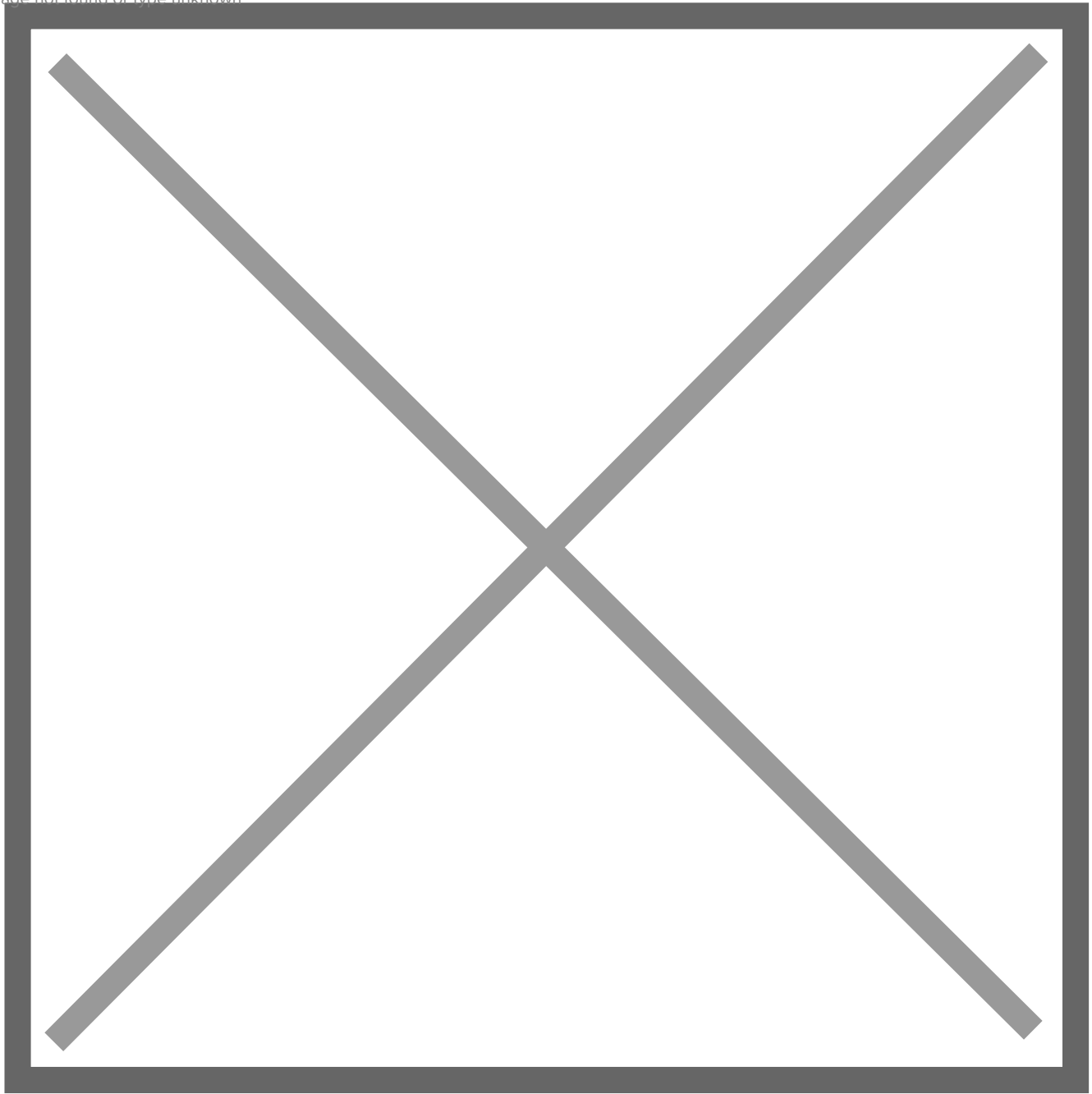
Kathleen A. Marchione

Senator Kathleen Marchione, Assemblymember John McDonald, Assemblyman Dan Stec and veteran's advocates announce new bipartisan legislation "OORAH!" – "Opening Opportunities, Resources and Access for Heroes" – to help veteran-owned businesses

KATHLEEN A. MARCHIONE November 15, 2013

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Senator Kathleen Marchione, Assemblymember John McDonald, Assemblyman Dan Stec and veteran's advocates announce new bi-partisan legislation "OORAH!" – "Opening Opportunities, Resources and Access for Heroes" – to help veteran-owned businesses

Bi-partisan coalition urges passage of OORAH! during 2014 Session to send message that Albany is putting veterans first

In one of the first substantive, bi-partisan pro-veteran initiatives hoped to be advanced in both houses of the State legislature during the 2014 Session, Senator Kathleen A. Marchione (R,C-Halfmoon), Assemblymember John T. McDonald III (D-108th District), Assemblyman Dan Stec (R,C,I-Queensbury) and Capital Region veteran's advocates today announced a bill titled "OORAH!" – "Opening Opportunities, Resources and Access for Heroes" – Senate Bill S.5968 and Assembly Bill A.8230.

The bi-partisan coalition of elected officials and veteran's advocates today urged passage of OORAH! for the 2014 Session as one of many ways New York could help veteran-owned businesses and demonstrate that Albany is committed to putting veterans first. Beginning in July, Marchione (a Senate Republican), McDonald (an Assembly Democrat), and Stec (an Assembly Republican), actively partnered with veteran's advocates in the Capital Region to draft the bi-partisan legislation. Some of the many benefits and support services that OORAH! would provide for veteran-owned businesses in New York State would include the following:

- **Access to economic programs and incentives, including opportunities in state contracting, now offered to minorities and women for their business enterprises;**

- **Veteran-owned Business Enterprise (VBE) certification status;**
- **Assistance by Division of Minority, Women and Veteran-owned Business Development;**
- **Inclusion as a VBE in the directory of certified minority, women, and now, veteran-owned business enterprises which is distributed to all state contracting agencies encouraging MWVBE use;**
- **Access to incubator space, as well as business start-up loans, micro-loans and revolving trust fund accounts;**
- **Percentage share of state contract procurement determined by the next Study of the Minority Women and Veteran-owned Business Enterprise Program;**
- **Listing in the New York City-wide contracting goals enabling VBEs to be a part of agency utilization plans and outreach activities; and**
- **Percentage share of New York City-wide contracts used to set agency goals determined by the 2015 city review.**

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“We owe so much to our heroic veterans, as a community, state and nation. While it’s a debt that can never be fully repaid, we have a duty, a moral obligation, to let our veterans know we have their backs in terms of services and support that can help them and their families. Our veterans fought for us, now it’s our turn to fight for them, which is why John, Dan and I partnered together, worked with outstanding local veteran’s advocates and introduced OORAH! This legislation would ensure veteran-owned businesses have more support, resources, assistance, and a share of state contracts, as well as micro loans and incubator space, to grow their businesses. This is a 100 percent bi-partisan effort that, frankly, should be a model for the upcoming 2014 Session and making state government work for the people. It is our sincere hope that OORAH! will receive strong, bi-partisan support in both the Senate and Assembly so we can deliver a crystal clear message that Albany is serious about putting veterans first and helping veteran-owned business succeed and grow, especially in this tough economy,” said Senator Marchione.

“OORAH! is an important step in providing opportunity to our veteran-owned businesses that often employ other veterans. In as much as there have been attempts in the past to include opportunities for veteran-owned businesses either in one section of the law or another, this is by far the most comprehensive bill that has been introduced. It seeks to include Veterans in every definition of Minority and Women-Owned businesses and at the same time calls for a disparity study that will identify the true percentages of minority, women and veteran-owned businesses within the state of New York. At a time when veteran unemployment is above the average unemployment rate, this bill looks to address a concern that continues to grow as our men and women return home from serving our country. I am pleased to join with Senator Marchione in this effort and will work toward its passage in the New York State Assembly,” said Assemblymember John T. McDonald III.

“As a veteran, I know the importance of providing our veterans with opportunities and recognizing their service and sacrifice. I’m proud to be a sponsor of this bipartisan bill that will allow veteran-owned businesses to access economic programs and incentives,” said Assemblyman Dan Stec.

“Saratoga County is home to nearly 17,000 veterans and we know that many of our veterans who have served and returned home, and those who still serve and will soon be returning home, are looking for jobs. For those who have a desire for small-business ownership or those who may have once been an entrepreneur, the passage of OORAH! could be the defining factor in their decision to pursue those opportunities. The passage of Senate Bill S.5968 and Assembly Bill A.8230 bill would amend Article 15-A of the New York Executive Law, currently written for minorities and women, by adding veterans to the law. Many small business minorities and women have excelled because of the passage of the New York Executive Law, Article 15-A. By supporting the addition of veterans to this Law, we will be caring for our Veterans as they have cared for us for so many years. It has been a most rewarding experience representing the Saratoga County Veterans committee on this task force and seeing and feeling the enthusiasm and support of Senator Marchione, Assemblyman Dan Stec and Assemblymember John McDonald as they sought out our input, shared in our concerns to assist our veterans and then, in a bipartisan effort, moved forward quickly to gain the support of their respective chambers. To all who participated in this endeavor, I say ‘thank you’ and for our Veterans, I say HOORAH for OORAH!,” said Supervisor Mary Ann Johnson, Chair, Saratoga County Board of Supervisors Veteran’s Committee.

“OORAH is not a handout to our veterans. It is a law stating that we as a State, stand behind you, believe in you and we will provide you the same benefits as our MWBE’s for the growth and sustainability of your business,” said Amy Amoroso, Veterans Business Advisor, Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC), Small Business Development Center.

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“On behalf of the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce and our Veterans Business Council, we applaud the efforts, and leadership, of the legislative delegation who saw the importance of including our veterans in provisions giving them the same access to economic programs and incentives that are now offered to minorities and women. This is an important step and we are proud to be a part of it,” said Denise J. Romeo, IOM, Vice President of Member Services, Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce.

“Veterans are proficient in achieving their mission and this bill will provide the right resources for entrepreneurial veterans to be successful in their next endeavor,” said Felipe C. Moon, USA, MAJ (Ret), Director, Saratoga County Veteran’s Service Agency.

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