



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara joins effort to enact 'Jobs for Heroes' to assist disabled vets, build on last year's Hire-a-Vet tax credit

THOMAS F. O'MARA January 15, 2014

| ISSUE: **VETERANS**



Albany, N.Y., January 15— Building on last year's creation of a Hire-a-Vet tax credit to encourage businesses in New York State to hire returning veterans, State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C-Big Flats) today joined a growing legislative effort this year to enact the "NY Jobs for Heroes Program" to assist New York State businesses owned by service-connected disabled veterans.

"Last year I was proud to help sponsor and fight for the Hire-a-Vet tax credit, which we hope will make a difference for returning veterans coming home to a nation and a state where it's tough to find a job," said O'Mara. "Now we have a real opportunity to build on last year's

success and, this year, enact the 'Jobs for Heroes Program' to more fully assist our disabled veterans who are self-employed or operate a small business. It's another investment in the future of our veterans and serves to help honor their service and sacrifice."

O'Mara highlighted federal Bureau of Labor statistics from 2012 showing that unemployment reached a staggering 20 percent for veterans under the age of 30 who recently returned home from Iraq and Afghanistan. Moreover, statistics show that a significant number of post-9-11 veterans report service-connected disabilities. Approximately 88,000 New Yorkers served in Afghanistan or Iraq.

Under the state's Hire-A-Vet tax credit, which was approved last March as part of the 2013-14 state budget and takes effect this year, businesses become eligible for a state tax credit after they've employed a post-9/11 veteran for one year. The credit will equal up to 10% of a veteran's salary – 15% of disabled veteran's salary – with the credits equaling up to \$5,000 for a non-disabled vet and \$15,000 for a disabled vet.

The proposed "NY Jobs For Heroes Program" (S.2803), which O'Mara co-sponsors in the Senate, would establish a state contract set-aside program for small businesses in New York owned by service-connected disabled veterans. The legislation mirrors a successful federal contract set-aside program for service-connected disabled vets. Similar set-aside programs have been created in nearly 40 other states.

If enacted in New York, the Jobs for Heroes program will be administered by the State Division of Veterans Affairs with the goal of establishing at least a five-percent set-aside in state contracts for service-connected disabled veterans.

One in seven veterans are self-employed or small business owners. New York has the fourth-highest number of veteran-owned businesses – trailing only California, Texas and Florida.

The Senate has repeatedly approved the legislation over the past several years, but it hasn't been acted on by Assembly leaders. O'Mara noted, however, that the current measure has bipartisan support in the Senate and Assembly and the concept was endorsed by Governor Andrew Cuomo last week in his State of the State message. Noting the high unemployment rate among post-9/11 veterans, the governor pledged to take steps "towards establishing up to a 5 percent goal in the awarding of state contracts to service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses."

The governor also plans to convene a "Veterans and Military Families Summit" this year.