



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

## Addabbo Discusses Needs of Former Servicemen and Servicewomen at American Legion Meeting & Governor's Summit on Veterans and Military Families

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR March 25, 2014

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**Queens, NY (March 25, 2014):** Earlier this week, State Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. and his colleagues responded to concerns of New York's veterans and passed a bill in which businesses owned by service-disabled veterans will receive 6 percent of state contracts and a Division of Service-Disabled Veterans' Business Development will be established within the State Office of General Services.

The unanimous approval came on the heels of the American Legion's annual legislative meeting in Albany, which Addabbo attended and spoke about various issues veterans experience every day.

Addabbo, the ranking Democratic member of the Senate Committee on Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs, was additionally invited by Governor Andrew Cuomo to participate in his Veterans and Military Families Summit in Albany. At the Summit, the announcement of an agreement to establish a new program to aid service-disabled veteran businesses in competing for state contracts was a highlight of the event.

"It was a privilege for me to join with so many of New York's veterans at both of these gatherings, where a variety of issues of importance to our former servicemen and servicewomen were highlighted and discussed," Addabbo said. "Topics ranged from developing the best avenues for helping our veterans find new employment and succeed in business to finding ways to address homelessness and the devastating increase in suicide rates, particularly among young men who entered the service following the 9/11 terrorist attacks."

This year, Addabbo noted, the Legion identified joblessness, suicide and homelessness as particular areas of concern within its 2014 legislative priorities.

“I applaud the Legion for highlighting these serious problems among many veterans,” he said. “New York State is third in the nation in terms of its homeless veteran population, with an estimated 4,660 homeless servicemen and servicewomen in shelters, transitional housing, or on the streets on any given night. We need to address this, as well as the shockingly high suicide rate among our nation’s veterans, which is estimated at 22 suicide deaths every single day.”

Addabbo is also championing legislation aimed at helping veterans find employment, as well as measures to study the rates of homeless women veterans in New York, which is a growing trend across the nation. He is also cracking down on veteran cemetery desecration, ensure that unclaimed cremated remains of veterans are treated with dignity, help reduce veteran tax burdens, and aid veteran organizations that are fined for minor building and other code violations.

At the American Legion 2014 Legislative Meeting this month, Addabbo noted that the Legion was holding its gathering just a few days past the 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding caucus in Paris in 1919.

“While the battlegrounds have been different over the last 95 years, the overriding needs of our veterans have remained very much the same,” he said. “Our veterans need jobs, education and health care. They need help transitioning back to their homes when they return from combat and, above all, our veterans need and deserve our respect and gratitude.”

Addabbo updated the American Legion members on the new law he sponsored in 2013 that required the State Division of Veterans Affairs to include a link on its website to help veterans seeking employment translate their military skills into civilian language.

“This should help veterans and potential employers better communicate about job skills and help more veterans get on more payrolls,” said Addabbo, noting that a 2007 study found that 61 percent of employers felt they did not have a complete understanding of the qualifications offered by former servicemen and servicewomen.

He added that joblessness is particularly high among post-9/11 veterans – standing at 10 percent, or about 246,000 servicemen and servicewomen.

At the Veterans and Military Families Summit convened by Governor Cuomo on March 20, Addabbo noted that many of these issues and others were discussed by Summit participants, which included top commissioners from a variety of state agencies, Senate and Assembly leaders, Veterans Committee chairs and members, and a broad spectrum of veteran group representatives.

“This day-long ‘meeting of the minds’ on issues of importance to veterans and their families was very enlightening, and the information presented will be very useful in enabling New York State to better address the diverse needs, concerns and aspirations of the courageous men and women who put their lives

on the line in service to all of us,” he said. “I look forward to continuing to work on these issues in the Senate and back in Queens, where I expect to sponsor additional job fairs and other events for the benefit of local veterans and their families.”