



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

Report from Senator Hoylman Shows Shameful Treatment of NY Veterans Discharged for Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity; Senator Unveils Legislation to Restore State Benefits for Discharged LGBT Vets

Brad Hoylman

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Memorial Day Report finds at least 53 state benefits for veterans are directly contingent upon their discharge status

“New York Restoration of Honor Act” would make veterans discharged solely due to their sexual orientation or gender identity eligible for state benefits

Hoylman: "We must act now to restore honor to those who risked their lives for our nation but have shamefully been denied access to the veterans' benefits they deserve, just because of who they are."

NEW YORK – Today, State Senator Brad Hoylman (D-Manhattan) released a report highlighting the shameful treatment of discharged LGBT veterans throughout New York State. According to the report, at least 53 state benefits for veterans are directly contingent upon the discharge status of the veteran, potentially making those who were discharged solely because of their sexual orientation or gender identity ineligible to receive them. Senator Hoylman will be introducing legislation that would make such veterans eligible for state benefits.

State Senator Brad Hoylman said: "We must act now to restore honor to those who risked their lives for our nation but have shamefully been denied access to the veterans' benefits they deserve, just because of who they are. It's appalling that there are generations of LGBT veterans right here in New York who continue to be discriminated against and denied important benefits by the very government they fought to defend. 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' thankfully is over, but my report shows that the holdover of the widespread injustice against LGBT service members remains. New York should fix it now by passing my New York Restoration of Honor Act."

The report notes that throughout our nation's history, service members willing to risk their lives in service of their country have faced everything from criminal penalties to unceremonious discharges solely due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. With the recent end to the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) policy in 2011, LGBT service members are now able to serve openly for the first time. However, generations of veterans in New York and across the country continue to be ineligible for a host of state and federal programs aimed at assisting veterans, from scholarships to job opportunities to health screenings to reimbursement for burial costs.

Senator Hoylman's New York Restoration of Honor Act would make clear that LGBT veterans are not to be considered ineligible to access state programs, services, or benefits for which they are otherwise eligible due to be discharged solely because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. It would establish a simple, streamlined certification process within the State Division of Veterans' Affairs for LGBT veterans to clarify their discharge status for the purposes of accessing state programs, services, or benefits.

The bill would also place the burden on the state to prove that a veteran who has been discharged from the military because of their sexual orientation or gender identity is not otherwise eligible to receive state programs, services, or benefits.

See a copy of Senator Hoylman's report attached and a link to the report here:

http://www.nysenate.gov/sites/default/files/BH%20-%202015.05.25%20-%20Restoration%20of%20Honor%20Report_0_0.pdf

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