



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

Important Bills Passed This Week: Final Rest For Unclaimed Cremated Remains, Higher Limit For Fuel Cell Generators, and More!

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS March 7, 2014

Final Rest For Unclaimed Cremated Remains of Veterans: Too often, cremated remains of veterans lie unclaimed on shelves and in storage facilities at mortuaries, hospitals, prisons, and funeral homes for months or years instead of being properly and respectfully laid to rest. Under the current law these facilities are not permitted to release the remains to anyone who is not a family member or personal friend leading to long term storage often at high cost to the facilities. Senate Bill S.1615-B would permit these facilities to release cremated veteran remains to tax exempt veteran's organizations that will properly inter them. Similar laws have already been successfully implemented in other states, and it is time for New York to adopt these practices.

Penalties For Desecration of Veterans Graves: Under current law there are no specific penalties for desecration of a veteran's gravesite outside of the law that applies to all gravesites. Due to the significance of veterans' service to our nation, Senate Bill [S.283](#) will define felony penalties for the desecration of their gravesites. Penalties will be increased for repeat offenses, providing heightened legal protection for gravesites and memorials dedicated to the men and women of the Armed Forces who have served during wartime.

Improvements For Veterans' Credits Application Process: Senate Bill [S280-A](#) will allow the veterans' credit to be added to civil service examination scores even if the eligibility list has already been written and until the time of its expiration. Veterans applying the credits will be less limited by time constraints, making them more likely to be hired to civil service positions including the state police.

Closed Circuit TV For Domestic Abuse Testimony: Domestic violence often includes physical and sexual violence and intimidation, and only 70% of cases are reported due in large part to

fear of retribution against victims by their abusers. In cases where reports and testimony are given details may be left out for fear of further abuse in retaliation. Senate Bill S.2205 would allow testimony to be given by closed circuit TV, eliminating the stress and intimidation of being in the same room with an abuser and increasing the chance that a fuller account will be given. CCTV testimony will lead to fewer cases going unreported.

Higher Limits For Fuel Cells Generators: Clean energy technologies like solar energy, anaerobic digesters, and fuel cell generators are innovative ways for consumers to produce clean energy and reduce their utility costs. Recent legislation has increased the net metering limits for solar and farm waste technologies from 1500 kilowatt hours to 2000, but upgrades for fuel cell generators have remained the same. Senate Bill [S.6485](#) will allow non-residential customers to upgrade their fuel cell generators to enable net metering credits of 2000 kilowatt hours, leveling the playing field for clean energy technologies.