



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

## Showing his medal: Senator Murphy Passes Medal of Honor Day to recognize New York State's Most Valiant Heros

TERRENCE MURPHY June 16, 2017

| ISSUE: **MILITARY, MILITARY APPRECIATION, UNITED STATES MILITARY**



Albany, NY - Every man and woman who puts on uniform to defend our freedom is a hero. Those who face impossible odds, withering fire or relentless foes and further distinguish themselves in battle are among the 3,500 individuals who have been given the Medal of Honor. The Medal is the highest award for valor in action bestowed upon an individual serving in the Armed Services of the United States.

As an advocate for our veterans and active military personnel, Senator Terrence Murphy has authored and passed S5587, legislation establishing "Medal of Honor Day" in New York.

"There have been six hundred and sixty-six Medals of Honor awarded to New Yorkers dating back to the Civil War," said Senator Murphy. "These brave souls are true American heroes. Having a day to formally recognize them across New York State gives us another opportunity to acknowledge and thank them for their extraordinary courage."

Peter Fiumefreddo, Chairman of the New York State Medal of Honor Committee said, "Senator Murphy has done great work, especially when it comes to our veterans. This is an opportunity to recognize and tell the stories of notable Civil War Medal of Honor recipients like Michael Murphy Cotter and Luigi Palma di Cesnola, who are buried at Kensico Cemetery, and Mary Walker, a Civil War surgeon who treated both Union and Confederate soldiers, and is the only woman to receive the Medal of Honor. Medal of Honor Day will be an uplifting experience for those who served and for those who care about them."

Eugene Lang received a Purple Heart for his bravery in action in Vietnam, was inducted into the New York State Veterans' Hall of Fame by Senator Murphy in 2015, and volunteers to help his fellow veterans. Upon hearing news of the July 25th designation he said, "These men and women were extraordinarily brave, putting their lives on the line. There are only seventy or so Medal of Honor winners still alive in the country. I think it is an excellent idea to dedicate a day in their honor because they deserve the recognition."

Mount Kisco Mayor Michael Cindrich cited Private Henry Johnson as exemplifying the grit and courage of a Medal of Honor recipient. On May 15, 1918 while on sentry duty on the front lines in France, Private Johnson and another soldier from the 369th Infantry were attacked by a German raiding party of over a dozen soldiers. Despite being seriously wounded, Private Johnson retaliated, inflicting several enemy casualties. When his fellow soldier was badly

wounded and taken prisoner by the enemy, Private Johnson further risked his life by advancing from his position to engage the two enemy captors in hand-to-hand combat. Wielding only a knife, he defeated the two captors, rescuing the wounded soldier. He continued to hold off the larger enemy force until the raiding party retreated, leaving behind a large supply of weapons, equipment and valuable intelligence. Johnson became one of the first Americans to be awarded the French Croix de Guerre avec Palme, France's highest award for valor. He was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart in 1996 and the Distinguished Service Cross in 2002.

"Senator Murphy understands the sacrifices our men and women have made around the globe," said Mayor Cindrich. "These heroes, like Private Johnson, deserve their place in history next to the state's most familiar names. Their actions demonstrate what we as a people can do when faced with adversity."

Among the many local heroes awarded a Medal of Honor were Civil War soldiers William Brewer and Henry Weir. Appropriately born in West Point, (these days the home some of the country's most elite units) Captain Weir and his men engaged the enemy at St. Mary's Church in Virginia on June 24, 1864. With his division under intense fire and falling back, Captain Weir gave his horse to a wounded officer, who was able to escape. Captain Weir rallied his remaining men, repelling the enemy's last charge.

A resident of Putnam County, Private Brewer served with the 2nd New York Cavalry at Appomattox in 1865, capturing the engineering flag of the Army of North Virginia. Croton Falls native Private Howard Buckley received the Medal of Honor for his actions during the Philippine-American War. Buckley was awarded his medal for bravery during a series of battles in March and April in 1899.

The legislation has been sent to the Assembly where it is sponsored by Assemblymember

Pamela Hunter of Syracuse who is a decorated veteran of the United States Army.