



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

## Protecting sacred ground: Legislation sponsored by Senator Murphy will help state acquire Montrose V.A. as a sanctuary for veterans

TERRENCE MURPHY June 19, 2017

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ALBANY, NY - Our veterans have dodged bullets in bug infested rice patties, prayed as anti-aircraft fire shredded their planes, and fired their guns at enemy vessels until their barrels were white hot, all in a noble effort to protect our freedom. For many, coming home to their families was enough of a reward. Others lost their homes, friends and families and wound up

in Veterans Health Administration (VA) hospitals because of the physical woes and cumulative stress associated with being in battle.

It has been well documented that federal VA system continues to fail our veterans. A recent report released by the General Accounting Office showed there are more than 71,000 veterans waiting more than 30 days to receive care. Even before he took the oath of office as a Senator in 2014, Terrence Murphy was a leader in the fight to provide quality health care for our veterans. A new bill created by Senator Murphy (S289), will help New York State take care of their aging warriors.

This bill will authorize the state to acquire portions of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt campus of the Department of Veteran's Affairs Hudson Valley Health Care System at Montrose from the federal government.

"The Montrose VA Hospital is sacred ground. For many of the veterans who have lived at this facility it is the only home they have known for many years," said Senator Murphy. "This legislation will authorize the Commissioner of Health to acquire the portions of the site so they can be repurposed for increased medical services for veterans and other programs, such as job training, education, new skills development and services for our female veterans."

"The men and women who have protected our way of life should continue to have a place they can call home in their final years," said Westchester County Legislator John Testa. "Our veterans deserve the very best care. They should be treated with the respect they have earned and deserve, rather than cast aside to fend for themselves. You cannot trade the blood they have shed for condominiums."

"We need to be cognizant of the needs of our veterans. Their needs often slip through the cracks," said Karl Rohde, Director for the Putnam County Veterans Service Agency. "With our

aging veteran population, and the fact that our current group of enlisted men and women are returning home having survived wounds that would have killed any other generation of warriors, we need to step up to the plate. We need to take care of our own. This bill of the Senator's goes a long way in do just that."

Originally known as Crugers Point Park, the land was optioned to the Veterans' Administration by Westchester County Executive Herbert Gerlach on February 13, 1945 for the construction of the first Veterans' facility in the nation. This land was deeded for Veteran's services, and today is also home to the twenty-five acre New York State Veteran's Home at Montrose.

In recent years, many of the critical services offered at this facility, which sits across the Hudson River from the United States Military Academy West Point and caters to one of the State's largest Veterans populations, have been moved to other facilities and portions of the campus have fallen into disrepair.

Sitting on what is perhaps the last prime, undeveloped riverfront property along the Hudson River within thirty miles of New York City, the Veteran's Hospital in Montrose has attracted the gaze of developers seeking to cash in by constructing condominiums on its untouched acreage.

"We cannot ask those who have given so much to all of us to travel long distances for these services just to construct luxury condominiums," said Senator Murphy. "This land should continue to be used for Veteran's services. We are the land of the free because of the brave and we should not be sacrificing the care of our local heroes so the federal government can make a profit on land development."

The bill passed the Senate unanimously by a vote of 60-0 on June 15th and was sent to the Assembly for a vote.

A second bill sponsored by Senator Murphy, S2096C creates the "New York's Own Combat Veterans Healthcare Choice Program Act." This bill would authorize the creation of healthcare savings accounts for New York resident combat veterans. This new program will provide a bridge to much needed healthcare, since many veterans have been unable to secure primary care, or an appointment with a US Veterans Administration primary care physician on a timely basis.