



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Seward, Crouch Enlist Support of Senate Veterans Committee Chair in Fight to Reopen Sidney Veterans' Office

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ONEONTA, 08/02/17 -- State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I/Ref – Oneonta) and Assemblyman Clifford W. Crouch (R-Guilford) today renewed their objection to the recent closure of the New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) office in Sidney. Senator Thomas D. Croci (R/C/I – Sayville), chairman of the the Senate Committee on Homeland Security, Veterans and Military Affairs, has joined the effort to reopen the vital service for veterans. Further, the legislators also announced that, with the assistance of the Town of Sidney, they have reached agreement with the Tri-Town Regional Hospital to provide office space at no cost.

Senator James L. Seward said, "Once again, our small rural communities are the target of service cuts, and this time it is our most respected men and women – our veterans – who are taking the hit. We should be exploring ways to make life easier for our veterans, not callously eliminating the few basic services we do provide for the men and women who have sacrificed for our freedoms and way of life."

Assemblyman Clifford W. Crouch said, "Our veterans deserve the services and assistance they earned while serving our country. These are the very people who have served our country and laid their lives on the line to ensure we can be safe at home. I can understand the need and desire of our government to save money but we should hold fast and provide the continued service to our veterans."

Senator Thomas D. Croci (R/C/I – Sayville) added, "I am disappointed by the closure of the DVA office in Sidney. It is our profound responsibility to ensure that New York

State government work to serve the needs of our service men and women who served and sacrificed for us. The closure of the DVA office in Sidney is the direct opposite of sound, purposeful decision-making, leaving our veterans without vital services in their community, all in the name of a dollar. I applaud my colleagues Jim Seward and Clifford Crouch on their advocacy to help find temporary solutions to resolve a situation that will be devastating to the Veterans in the Sidney area. I urge Governor Cuomo to reverse this short-sighted decision and restore service to our veterans in New York State.”

The DVA satellite office in Sidney had been open two days per week, providing veterans with a helpful resource to access information and services. In June, the DVA closed the office forcing veterans to seek assistance in other locations. Veterans are now relegated to traveling to Oneonta or another DVA office or contacting a veterans benefits advisor via phone or email.

In a letter to Governor Cuomo, Senator Seward and Assemblyman Crouch write:

“Not only should these resources be easily accessible, they should be fully funded. This year, funding for the Division of Veterans Affairs did not decrease in the state budget, yet your department is cutting programs and placing countless veterans at a great inconvenience. Ultimately, our local veterans are taking the hit as you nickel and dime an agency that spends very little in the grand scheme of things.

“Closing the New York State Division of Veterans’ Affairs (DVA) satellite office in Sidney is an absolute outrage. Our veterans have made great sacrifices for our country and we need not be taking valuable resources from them. Rather, we should be making it easier for them to access the benefits and programs they so justly deserve. We implore you to find other funding to keep this office open and available to our veterans.”

Town of Sidney Supervisor Gene Pigford confirmed the town’s support for the return of the DVA office as well as the free space at Tri-Town Regional Hospital saying, “Many of our residents have given faithful service to their country and are needing and most deserving of as much local and regional support as can be given them. Peter Berhoudt, the senior director of operations for Tri-Town Regional Hospital is in full support of this as well. Space at the hospital, conducive to the veterans office operations will be made available to them at not cost.”

Senator Seward and Assemblyman Crouch also commended Tri-Town Regional Hospital for stepping forward to provide free office space, alleviating one of the cost concerns expressed by the DVA.

“Tri-Town Regional Hospital is a true community partner, and we see no reason why the DVA shouldn’t quickly accept the hospital’s generous offer and restore services to our deserving veterans,” Seward and Crouch concluded.