



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tony Avella

Senator Avella Presents Longtime Community Leader with Highest Civilian Honor

[Tony Avella](#)

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Queens, NY – Today, State Senator Tony Avella presented local community leader Walter Mugdan with the New York State Senate Liberty Medal. The Liberty Medal is one of the highest civilian honors that can be bestowed upon a New York State resident by the Senate. All of this year's honorees are longstanding leaders in their communities through decades of service.

In August, Senator Avella presented four other longstanding community leaders with the honor but Mr. Mugdan was unable to attend.

In July of 2015, Senator Avella announced the launch of his inaugural Liberty Medal awards, which honor some of the most dedicated civic leaders throughout his district. Continuing in that tradition, Senator Avella honored **Walter Mugdan, Henry Euler, Kevin and Jackie Forrestal, and Seymour "Sey" Schwartz** with the 2017 Liberty Medal during ceremonies at the Senator's Bayside office.

"Like years past, this year's honorees are all members of the community who have dedicated their lives to civic engagement in an effort to improve the lives of all New Yorkers. Queens has been fortunate to have received Walter's service and I can certainly say that our borough has been able to stand the test of time because of that service. His work with the Udalls Cove Preservation Committee has been instrumental to the preservation, conservation, and restoration of the remaining wetlands and woodlands in the Udalls Cove watershed in my district and I thank him for his service," **said Senator Avella.**

"Often times a leader like Walter, who does all of his work out of the goodness of his own heart and without receiving a paycheck, go unrecognized for their tremendous contributions. I am happy that I am able to provide him with this high honor as a thank you from all of Queens," **added Senator Avella.**

"I am very, very grateful and flattered to receive this honor. I've worked with Senator Avella and, before that, Councilman Avella and I'm grateful for his support. I've spent my whole life working in the environmental field and I do it professionally but I really love the work I do with the Udalls Cove Preservation Committee," **said Walter Mugdan.**

BIO: Walter has worked since 1975 in Region 2 of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, where he is currently serving as Acting Deputy Regional Administrator. His regular position is as director of the region's hazardous waste cleanup and

emergency response programs, where he is responsible for cleaning up some of the nation's most notorious toxic waste sites including the Gowanus Canal, Newtown Creek, the Passaic River and the Hudson River. He previously managed the region's air, water and environmental assessment programs; and he also served for many years as Regional Counsel, the region's chief legal officer. In 2015, Walter received the Presidential Rank Distinguished Service Award, the highest award for a civilian employee of the federal government. In 2016, he received the Muskie-Chafee Award from the Environment & Natural Resources Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, that Division's highest award for a person who is not a DOJ employee. Walter has served since 2002 as President of the Udalls Cove Preservation Committee, a local conservation group. Since 2005 Walter has managed restoration and improvement projects in Udalls Cove Park valued at nearly \$250,000. He has worked with State and City governments to continue the acquisition of privately held properties within the designated boundaries of the park. Walter has also served since 2002 as President of the Westmoreland Association, a local homeowners civic association representing residents in the northeast corner of Queens County. Walter earned both his bachelors and law degrees from the University of Michigan. He grew up in Douglaston, in the northeast corner of Queens County, and attended New York City public schools. He has lived since 1976 in nearby Little Neck, where he and his wife Vivienne raised their daughter Elana.