



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senate approves comprehensive legislative package addressing challenges for active military, veterans: O'Mara, colleagues support actions to bolster numerous programs and services

THOMAS F. O'MARA May 17, 2018

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Albany, N.Y., May 17—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) today said that the Senate has approved a comprehensive package of legislation addressing a range of concerns and challenges facing New York's active military men and women, and veterans.

The legislative action came during the same week that the Senate inducted nearly 60 New York State veterans into the Senate Veterans' Hall of Fame, including long-time Savona (Steuben County) farmer and World War II veteran Warren A. Thompson, who O'Mara chose to represent his 58th Senate District (read more [HERE](#)).

"I am proud to help support this legislation and move it through the legislative process in order to more fully recognize the sacrifices of America's active military and veterans. Our military men and women make a remarkable commitment to serve this nation, and in return we have a duty and responsibility to take actions and provide the programs and services they need and deserve," said O'Mara.

The legislation focuses on employment, health care, home ownership, tax relief and a range of other economic, educational, public safety and government services challenges and concerns.

O'Mara said this week's Senate action included approving legislation to:

- > create a task force to study and improve the job market for veterans. The task force, which would be comprised of stakeholders from state government, the private sector, and institutions of higher education, would hold annual public hearings and make recommendations on how the state assists military veterans find and maintain employment (S936);
- > create a certified service-disabled veteran-owned business enterprise development and lending program to help provide financial and technical assistance to disabled veterans who have started a business in New York (S5642);
- > encourage public employers to hire military service veterans by establishing a "Hire a Vet" program to provide grants to municipalities employing a veteran (S3879);

> provide free hunting, fishing and trapping licenses to state residents who are active duty members of the United States Armed Services (S854);

> grant an additional real property tax exemption for two qualified veterans who reside in the same household in relation to the alternative veterans' exemptions (S3336);

> provide surviving dependent family members of New York State military personnel who have died while performing official military duties with free tuition and room and board at State University (SUNY) or City University (CUNY) of New York colleges and universities (S254);

> help service-related disabled veterans afford a home by giving those with a VA disability rating of 40 percent or higher a preference in applications to the state's Affordable Home Ownership Development Program (S5158);

> establish a Veterans' Gerontological Advisory Committee to help address the needs of a state with the second-highest veteran population in America, and an older veteran population whose needs and problems pervade multiple geriatrics and gerontology disciplines. At no cost to the taxpayers, the advisory committee will be able to provide crucial recommendations to the Director of the state Office for the Aging on policies, programs, services and trends affecting the aging veteran population (S3709);

> provide an annual increase to the Gold Star Parent Annuity in relation to increased annual costs of living (S1124);

> direct the state Division of Veterans' Affairs and other state agencies to study and address the alarming trend of homeless persons who are veterans in New York, as well as the amount of homeless veterans who are also parents (S2189);

- > establish a Class D felony for the crime of inciting violence against both active duty and reserve military service members in an effort to combat an increasingly disturbing trend of violence against military men and women (S927);
- > designate March 13 as the annual "K9 Veterans Day" in New York State (S216);
- > establish a veterans cemetery funding promotion program, building upon the Veterans Remembrance and Cemetery Maintenance and Operation Fund and New York State Veterans Cemetery program, both created in 2013 and administered by the state Division of Veterans' Affairs (S3906); and
- > establish the "Veterans' Memorials Preservation Act" to help protect veterans' memorials throughout the state (S7870).

Earlier this year, O'Mara and his Senate colleagues also restored significant funding in the 2018-19 state budget for veterans' initiatives and increased funding for numerous programs that support veterans and their families.