



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

## State Legislature approves two bills co-sponsored by Addabbo to aid veterans and military members living with sexual assault and mental health challenges

SENATOR JOSEPH P. ADDABBO, JR. July 31, 2019

| ISSUE: **VETERANS, MENTAL HEALTH, SEXUAL ASSAULT, ADDABBO**

NYS Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. recently voted with his Senate and Assembly colleagues to approve legislation he co-sponsors to assist veterans who experienced sexual assault during their military service or training, and to help servicemen and women gain access to necessary mental health and substance abuse services.

“The brave men and women who sign up for service in the armed forces make an extraordinary commitment to all of us with their courage and dedication to our national security and well-being,” said Addabbo, a member of the Senate Committee on Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs. “But all too often, this exceptional service comes at a high price for our men and women in uniform. Some suffer from sexual assault in the armed forces, and some develop mental health and substance abuse challenges associated with their very stressful military careers. Unfortunately, some of those who suffer the most are too frightened or ashamed to come forward for help. We need to change that.”

The first piece of legislation (S.5006) co-sponsored by Addabbo would provide a special military sexual assault portal on the website of the NYS Division of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), which would provide access to state and federal resources to aid veterans who experienced

assault during training or active duty.

“According to the most recent United States Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military, 5,277 service members made reports of sexual assault in 2017, which includes 4,193 complaints from women, and 1,084 from men,” said Addabbo. “Yet this figure doesn’t reflect the number of service members who felt they were unable to report their assaults, and suffered in silence. This new portal on the DVA website, by making information about counseling and other resources more easily accessible, may provide a welcome and compassionate helping hand for veterans who need support in dealing with the aftermath of their painful experiences.”

The second bill (S.3200) championed by Addabbo requires the State Office of Mental Health to work in conjunction with the State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services to develop a public education initiative aimed at eliminating stigmas and misinformation about mental illness and substance use and abuse among military members.

“It’s hardly surprising that many men and women who put their lives in danger on behalf of their country, and who often find themselves in extremely frightening and traumatizing circumstances, experience a variety of mental health issues, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and other psychological illnesses,” said Addabbo. “Sometimes they will turn to substance abuse in an effort to make themselves feel better. But while mental health issues remain a serious concern among both active and retired military members – with a suicide rate of 19.9 out of 100,000 service members – it is not unusual for servicemen and women to avoid treatment for fear of being stigmatized.” A 2011 government survey of almost 600,000 service members found that 37 percent believed seeking mental health care would probably or definitely damage their military careers.

Now that the bills have been approved by the full State Senate and Assembly, they will be sent to Governor Cuomo for consideration and final action.

## 2019-S5006

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- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
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Relates to providing information on where to seek help in regards to military sexual trauma

April 03, 2019

Senate Floor Calendar

Sponsored by **Kevin S. Parker**

Do you support this bill?

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## 2019-S3200

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- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
- 

Relates to creating mental illness and substance use initiative

February 04, 2019

Senate Floor Calendar

Sponsored by **Kevin S. Parker**

Do you support this bill?