



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patrick M. Gallivan

# Senator Gallivan Calls on Governor to Fund Critical Veterans Program

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ISSUE:

- [Veterans](#)
- [Joseph Dwyer Peer-to-Peer Veterans' Support Program](#)



Senator Patrick M. Gallivan, (R-C-I, Elma) joined members of the Senate Minority Conference and Congressman Lee Zeldin this week in calling on Governor Andrew Cuomo to restore funding for the PFC Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans' Support Program. The Dwyer Program provides essential peer-to-peer mental health support to veterans across New York State and has been immensely impactful in providing veterans with much-needed emotional assistance during reintegration into civilian life.

"The Joseph P. Dwyer Program provides critically important services for veterans struggling with post-traumatic stress or traumatic brain injury," Senator Gallivan said. "We can never fully repay our veterans for their service to our country, but we can ensure they receive the support and treatment they deserve. The Legislature must provide the funding necessary to continue this program in communities throughout the state."

Joseph P. Dwyer was a United States Army combat medic in the Iraq War who was portrayed in an iconic photo carrying a young Iraqi boy away from danger. After PFC Dwyer's return home from service overseas, he struggled with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Congressman Lee Zeldin was instrumental in the creation of the Dwyer Program during his time as a New York State Senator.

"The PFC Joseph P. Dwyer Veteran Support Program saves lives, and at a time when so many of our communities' veterans feel more isolated than ever before, funding for this critical program has never been more important. This effective, efficient and tailored program has always received bipartisan support from our local governments up to the State Capitol. However, year after year, this veterans program has been cut off and used as a political ploy in Albany's budget negotiations, and playing games with our veterans' lives is unacceptable. Not only must full funding for the Dwyer Program be restored in this year's final budget, but this program's funding must become a permanent component of all future state budgets," said Congressman Zeldin, a U.S. Army veteran who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

On March 15, the State Senate Majority released its one-house budget bill with a proposal of \$4.5 million for funding the Dwyer program, which is the same funding level adopted in Fiscal Year 2021. In contrast, the State Assembly Majority's one-house bill proposed \$6.05 million. In light of this development, the elected officials are demanding that Governor Cuomo approve the Assembly proposal, which would

be, quite literally, life saving.

Last year's Final State Budget included \$4.5 million in funding for the Dwyer Program, although a large portion was withheld by the Executive for months on end. The Governor's budget proposal this year left out the Dwyer Program entirely.