



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

## Harckham's Bills Offer Recognition to Iraq and Afghanistan War Veterans

PETE HARCKHAM May 31, 2022

| ISSUE: **SENATOR HARCKHAM. SD40, VETERANS AFFAIRS, VFW, IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN VETERANS**



*Albany, NY* – New York State Senator Pete Harckham and his colleagues in the State Senate passed two of his bills recently, both of which establish special commemorative medals to veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, respectively. The legislation is part of Harckham's continuing effort to provide greater recognition and support of veterans of armed service statewide and ensure they receive the benefits they have rightfully earned.

“The residents of New York who have served in the armed forces deserve much more than a ‘thank you’ and ‘job well done’ for their sacrifice and valor—it’s time we showed our real appreciation for their

service,” said Harckham. “While the commemorative medals are a symbolic recognition of this service in two particular areas of conflict, our prevailing concern and care for the well-being of our veterans should be absolute, always.”

Harckham serves on the Senate Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs Committee.

The first bill, [S.8475](#), authorizes the Adjutant General (the state’s highest ranking military official in the New York National Guard) to present in the name of the State Legislature a medal to be known as the “New York State Afghanistan War Commemorative Medal” to members of the armed forces who served abroad in Afghanistan from October 2001 through August 2021. It is not required for recipients of this medal to have been residents of New York during the time of this service.

The second bill, [S.8476](#), allows a “New York State Iraq War Commemorative Medal” to be presented to members of the armed forces who served abroad in Iraq from March 2003 until December 18, 2011. Both bills were approved in the Senate with bipartisan support.

“I believe that the recognition given from the State of New York to those who have been awarded the Iraqi and Afghanistan campaign medals is a great start,” said Sean Witoshynsky, Commander of VFW Post 9257 in Putnam Lake. “These warriors have fought an unprecedented 20 year long war: for the first time in our history, a member of the military could have had a child while deployed, and now his or her child could be fighting on the same streets half the world away. Undoubtedly, these campaigns have changed warfare forever. The commemorative medals from New York acknowledge and honor the sacrifices given by our service members and their families.”

In 2019, Harckham established a Veterans Advisory Board that meets regularly; it is where some of the veteran-focused legislation he has introduced first was suggested. In addition, Harckham has been instrumental in ensuring annual state funding for the PFC Joseph P. Dwyer Vet 2 Vet Program, a peer counseling and support initiative, and the program’s recent expansion across the state.

Governor Kathy Hochul has signed into law during the past year three bills that Harckham introduced. One ([S.2997A](#)) improves communications between healthcare providers and veterans and their family members in order to increase access to health benefits. Another bill ([S.7114](#)) designates a pedestrian bridge over the Taconic Parkway as the Atomic Veterans Memorial Bridge in recognition of service members exposed to atomic weapons testing. The third bill ([S.7693](#)) establishes a council of treatment equity within the Office of Addiction Services and Supports to represent previously underrepresented populations, including veterans.

Earlier this year, Harckham successfully pushed to have the New York State Division of Veterans’ Services instituted as a full statewide agency, which will give it a more central role in determining its

funding and role in relation to other statewide agencies.

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## RELATED LEGISLATION

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### 2021-S8475

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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 the issuance of a New York State Afghanistan War Commemorative Medal

March 04, 2022

In Assembly Committee

Sponsored by **Pete Harckham**

Do you support this bill?

NAY