



NEW YORK STATE SENATE DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY

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Senate Democratic Majority to Pass Veteran Support Legislation in Honor of ‘Fort Drum Day’

(Albany, NY) The Senate Democratic Majority will celebrate the 9th Annual Fort Drum Day by welcoming members of the U.S. Army’s 10th Mountain Division, to the State Senate Chamber. In honor of Fort Drum Day, the Senate will pass legislation supporting New York veterans and active duty military personnel. The legislation advanced by the Senate Majority expands tax exemptions available to military personnel and veterans, establishes career support services, and implements the “Outdoor Rx Act” to help veterans transition back to civilian life. These bills build on the Senate Majority’s ongoing commitment to supporting the brave men and women who have served in the armed forces.

“As we celebrate ‘Fort Drum Day,’ I am proud to advance legislation that will support these brave men and women as they serve our country and then return to civilian life,” **Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins** said. “Our veterans and active military personnel have made sacrifices to defend our freedom and it is our duty to continue improving veterans’ services in New York. I thank Senator Brooks, Chair of the Senate’s Homeland Security and Military Affairs Committee, and all the bill sponsors for continuing to support our veterans and military families, and Senator Ritchie for her work to help organize Fort Drum Day. The Senate Majority will keep fighting for those who stepped up to defend our nation and values.”

The legislation advanced by the Senate Majority includes:

- **The Outdoor RX Act** : This bill [S.6706A](#) sponsored by Senator Brian Benjamin will require the Division of Veterans’ Services to work with other state offices to review issues facing veterans, their abilities to access state parks, lands, and facilities.
- **Veteran Career Assistance Program**: This bill [S.3471A](#) sponsored by Senator John Brooks will create a program within SUNY and CUNY systems to assist veterans in resume building and career searching. It will provide veterans with the tools to translate their military experiences and skills into a resume, and supportive employment placement services.
- **Veteran Civil Service Credit**: This bill [S.3647](#) sponsored by Senator Andrew Gounardes will allow anyone who has served in the military to receive preferences and additional credits on competitive examinations for civil service appointments. Currently, the credit is only available to veterans who served during a time of war.
- **Increases the Alternative Veterans Exemption**: This bill, [S.2570](#), sponsored by Senator Jamaal Bailey, provides additional real property tax exemption for two or more veterans living in the same household.
- **Tax Exemptions for Property Owners**: This bill, [S.2930A](#), sponsored by Senator John Brooks, authorizes municipalities to offer real property tax exemption for residential property owned by active duty military personnel.

- **Establishes Military Opportunities Day:** This bill, [S.6057](#), sponsored by Senator Brooks, establishes November 1st of each year as Military Opportunities Day, to show support and encouragement of military service recruiters and those who seek to enlist in military service.

Chair of the Veterans, Homeland Security, and Military Affairs and Bill Sponsor, Senator John E. Brooks said, “Today, as every year, I am proud to celebrate and honor the men and women of Fort Drum. But tomorrow and every day after, the 80,000 troops trained annually at Fort Drum will devote their lives to service without asking for or receiving recognition. No matter the mission, in fields of operation from Somalia to Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan, service-members from Fort Drum have stood ready to answer when called upon since the very inception of our nation. Though only commemorated once a year, Fort Drum Day is our chance to say thank you for your constant vigilance and sacrifice. By passing these bills we recognize that those who volunteer to serve our country should be afforded benefits and support in recognition of their service and willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice for their country.”

Bill Sponsor, Senator Jamaal Bailey, said, “Those state residents noble enough to enlist into the armed forces are among some of the best the state of New York has to offer. New York State currently recognizes soldiers who enlist and serve during wartime by granting them an Alternative Veterans real property tax exemption. Under current law, two veterans that qualify for the Alternative Veterans Exemption that reside in the same house, receive a single person’s exemption. This bill would allow for a household with two qualifying veterans an addition of half of the current percentage allowed. This legislation was introduced as an effort to properly recognize each, individual veteran that resides in the state of New York a reward for their service to this country.”

Bill Sponsor, Senator Brian Benjamin, said, “Our freedom to enjoy New York’s natural beauty in peace and security is predicated on the dedicated service of those New Yorkers who serve in our nation’s military. It is only fitting that New York’s natural resources give back to those who have given so much, and so I am proud to sponsor this bill with Assemblymember Barrett which will explore how our State Parks can be a part of the healing process for soldiers coming back home.”

Bill Sponsor, Senator Andrew Gounardes, said, “Anyone who serves in our military and then wants to continue their service in New York State government should be celebrated, not faced with barriers. There is nothing more patriotic than the desire to serve others - in our armed forces, in civil service, or however one chooses to make an impact. I am proud to pass this bill in the Senate to help veterans, no matter when and where they serve, to enter civil service and continue to make a difference for the public good.”

Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris said, “I am proud the Senate majority is taking important steps to display appreciation for the sacrifices made by our veterans. I am pleased to support the important bills we are passing today.”

Senate Majority Conference Chair Senator José Serrano said, “As New Yorkers, we have a duty to help those who bravely serve our country and make tremendous sacrifices in the name of our freedom. The bills we passed include a wide range of provisions to assist military personnel across the state both during active duty and as they transition back into civilian life. I’m proud that our actions today will help these courageous men and women get many of the services, support, and opportunities they deserve.”

Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. said, “Fort Drum Day allows us an opportunity to personally thank our military and demonstrate our continued support while they serve and upon their return to civilian life. I am proud to join my colleagues in passing these bills to help our veterans have greater access to employment, affordable housing, counseling, education and other necessary services. I consider every day to be Veterans Day, so to all veterans - Thank you.”

Senator Leroy Comrie said, “As the Senate proudly holds our annual Fort Drum Day to recognize the singular importance of the 10th Mountain Division to our state, nation and world I am proud to endorse a legislative package that will support, sustain and empower our heroic veterans and their families. At a time when many veterans and active military personnel find it challenging to access crucial services conducive to increased quality of life, these bills will help improve access to crucial educational and career-building services as well as affordable housing for our service personnel and their families.”

Senator Simcha Felder said, “Every day our freedoms are protected by the selfless and courageous service of our armed forces. It is our duty and honor to recognize our veterans in the best way we can.”

Senator Jim Gaughran said, “Our veterans dutifully served our country and now these bills will help them transition back to civilian life, afford a home, and more. To all our veterans, thank you for your service. And thank you Leader Stewart-Cousins for prioritizing the needs of our veterans and their families with the passage of these important bills.”

Senator Pete Harckham said, “Our veterans and current members of the Armed Forces, having pledged to protect our country, deserve to have the sacrifices and hardships related to their service properly supported. This means finding new ways to assist these dedicated women and men in their lives, both economically and socially. In this regard, the package of legislation passed by my Senate colleagues will help many New Yorkers, and I am honored to have given it my backing.”

Senator Anna M. Kaplan said, “Our nation and our state owe a significant debt of gratitude to the men and women who courageously defend our freedoms in the armed forces. I’m proud to co-sponsor legislation that will support our veterans, active-duty service members, and their families, and I thank each and every one of them for their service to our great nation.”

Senator Rachel May said, “Supporting our service men and women is key for us in the Senate Majority. It’s important that we honor their service by addressing some of the challenges our service members face when returning home to our communities. A critical piece of this effort is in providing additional resources for our veterans seeking new careers once they leave active duty, and supporting them every step of the way.”

Senator Julia Salazar said, “Too often our veterans have been promised services and opportunities that our states and municipalities have failed to deliver on. By passing this legislation that offers concrete support and assistance, we’re taking a step towards repairing the faith that veterans deserve to have in their government.”

Senator James Sanders Jr. said, “As a Marine Corps veteran and as a State Senator representing a district where many veterans live, I fully support this legislative initiative which will cohesively make improvements in the lives of the men and women who fought so bravely for our country. Providing job and career assistance, property tax exemptions, increased access to parks and outdoor facilities, educational incentives and even a special day to show support for those who would like to enlist in the military are all positive steps in allowing more of our best and brightest reach their full potential and that benefits all New Yorkers.”

Senator Luis Sepúlveda said, “In recognition of Fort Drum Day, I am proud to honor our veterans and military personnel in New York State. This new package of legislation will expand access to employment, social services, and tax exemptions. After putting their lives on the line for our country, veterans deserve adequate programs and resources to heal and thrive upon returning to civilian life. I commend my colleagues for their leadership on these issues and look forward to continuing to work for veteran’s rights and well-being in New York State.”

Senator James Skoufis said, “The state has a duty to empower the very people who have sacrificed themselves for the rest of us, which is why it’s imperative that we put forth legislation that puts active military and veteran New Yorkers first. This package of legislation expands access to services and benefits for veterans including tax

relief, gives the Division of Veterans' Services a larger role and louder voice in other state offices, and establishes career-building programs. I was proud to vote yes on these bills on Fort Drum Day and continue to stand by active military and veteran New Yorkers."

Senator Toby Ann Stavisky said, "As the Chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee, I am especially proud to support the Veteran Career Assistance Program. Our veterans return home with a set of skills that are invaluable to the modern workforce. This program will help ensure they are placed in the appropriate positions they've earned, and they can continue to support their families while helping strengthen New York's economy."

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