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## NEW YORK STATE SENATE DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY

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**For Immediate Release:** May 14, 2019

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### **Senate Democratic Majority To Celebrate ‘Fort Drum Day’ And Pass Veteran Benefits Legislation**

(Albany, NY) The Senate Democratic Majority will celebrate the annual Fort Drum Day by welcoming service members, especially members of the U.S. Army’s 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, to the State Senate Chamber. The State Senate will recognize Fort Drum Day by passing multiple pieces of legislation that will expand veteran’s benefits and ease transition back to civilian life. The bills that will be passed by the Senate Democratic Majority include efforts to provide veterans with a toll-free hotline on services and benefits; broaden property tax exemptions; implement additional employment benefits and academic credits; and provide military voters the opportunity to vote in school district elections.

“As the daughter and sister of veterans, I appreciate the many sacrifices made by service members and their loved ones,” **Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins** said. “We have a duty to support our veterans and help create opportunities for employment, education, and community integration as they rejoin civilian life. The Senate Majority remains committed to providing veterans and active military personnel, services and benefits to recognize their incredible service to our state and nation. I applaud Senator Brooks, Chair of the Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs Committee, and all the bill sponsors, for standing shoulder to shoulder with our veterans and military families.”

**Chair of the Veterans, Homeland Security, and Military Affairs and Bill Sponsor, Senator John E. Brooks** said, “We owe veterans a debt of gratitude that can never truly be repaid. Helping these heroes rejoin civilian life is a top priority for me, my committee, and the entire Senate Majority. I am proud that the bills advanced through my committee and passed by the Senate today will help our service members and their families. We will keep working to provide essential services, benefits, and support to the men and women who defended our nation as members of the armed forces.”

The legislation being advanced by the Senate Majority includes:

- **Active Duty Property Tax Exemptions:** This bill, [S.2930A](#), sponsored by Chair of the Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs, Senator John Brooks, will provide qualified active duty personnel a property tax exemption.
- **Expanding Licensed Veterans Employment:** This bill, [S.2113](#), sponsored by Senator James Sanders Jr., will permit veterans who are licensed to practice a profession in another jurisdiction to practice their profession in New York State while their application to practice their profession in New York State is being processed.
- **Veterans Help and Crisis Line:** This bill, [S.2283A](#), sponsored by Senator James Sanders Jr., will provide a toll-free telephone number for use as a help and crisis line to assist veterans.

- **Increase of Real Property Tax Exemption for Dual Veteran Households:** This bill, [S.2570](#), introduced by Senator Jamaal Bailey, will increase the Alternative Veterans Real Property tax exemption when two qualifying veterans reside in the same household.
- **Veteran Academic Credit:** This bill, [S.2741A](#), sponsored by Senator Joseph Addabbo, will allow full-time undergraduate students enrolled at state-operated institutions will be able to receive academic credit for their military service or training.
- **Expanding Veteran Credits on Civil Service Appointments:** This bill, [S.3647](#), sponsored by Senator Andrew Gounardes, will amend Section 6 of Article 5 of the New York State Constitution to eliminate the requirement that a veteran must have served in time of war, and allow for all individuals who have served in the armed forces to receive credits for civil service appointments and promotions.
- **Military Voters in School District Elections:** This bill, [S.5184](#), sponsored by Senator Shelley Mayer, will provide military voters the opportunity to vote in school district elections by allowing them to return their absentee ballot by postal mail.

**Bill Sponsor, Senator Joseph Addabbo**, said, “As we celebrate the men and women of Fort Drum and the 10th Mountain Division on the 2019 Fort Drum and 10th Mountain Day, I want to take a moment to thank all of our brave service men and women. Our veterans go through so much while serving our great state and country, that it is a shame that when they come home, they cannot apply the skills they’ve learned while in the military too many of the State Universities. That is why I introduced Bill S.2741A, which would allow every veteran who is a full-time undergraduate student and in good standing with a State University to use their training and service to get academic credits if the completed courses meet the standards of the American Council on Education. Hopefully this bill can be made into law and give our veterans a leg up on completing their higher education when they return home.”

**Bill Sponsor, Senator Jamaal Bailey**, said, “In honor of ‘Fort Drum Day’ I would like to welcome our veterans and service members to the State Senate Chamber. I would like to thank my leader, Andrea Stewart-Cousins for prioritizing our veterans and advancing a set of legislation that will benefit these brave men and women. One of the bills in this package is a bill I sponsored, that will increase the Alternative Veterans Real Property tax exemption for two veterans that reside in the same household. Adding an additional exemption for another qualified veteran is the least we could do for our women and men who have served us so bravely. Thank you to our veterans for their service.”

**Bill Sponsor, Senator Andrew Gounardes**, said, “We must honor all the brave men and women who served in our military and choose to continue their public service by working in government. Passing this constitutional amendment will eliminate the barriers that help some veterans but hold others back. We should reward their service and give them every opportunity and benefit we can to help them succeed when they come home. I'm proud to be the lead sponsor of this measure, and I'll be even more proud when we finally enact this measure.”

**Bill Sponsor, Senator Shelley Mayer**, said, “I am honored to stand with my colleagues as we celebrate Fort Drum Day by passing legislation to assist active duty military members and veterans. I am especially proud that my bill ensuring active duty military members have the opportunity to vote in school district elections is a part of this package. I am also pleased to vote in favor of legislation to provide property tax relief to active duty personnel and dual veteran households as well as other measures expand veterans benefits.”

**Bill Sponsor, Senator James Sanders Jr.**, said, “Our veterans have made incredible personal sacrifices to protect the rights and freedoms we enjoy. It is our duty to make their ability to transition into a productive life when they come back home as painless as possible. The Veterans help/crisis line legislation and the veterans’ transferable professional licensing legislation, help to make that productive transition a reality.”

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