



NEW YORK STATE SENATE

20 19

VETERANS' HALL OF FAME

WILLIS W. SMITH

Staff Sergeant Willis W. Smith gave a lifetime of service to both his country and his community.

Staff Sergeant Smith joined the Army Reserves in 1985 as a Heavy Equipment Operator, eventually transferring to the National Guard, where he would complete numerous state active duty assignments including the recovery of TWA Flight 800.

In 2009, he deployed to Afghanistan, overseeing multiple missions from building barricades, drainage systems and roads, to rebuilding an Afghanistan police station that had been bombed. Staff Sergeant Smith was awarded the NATO Meritorious Award for his leadership, working directly with Afghanistan soldiers on various projects and providing instruction while overcoming the language barrier.

In 2001, Staff Sergeant Smith deployed to Ground Zero to aid in the immediate recovery from the 9/11 terrorist attacks as a member of the 827th Engineer Company. In addition to his 22 years of military service and his civilian career as an ironworker, Staff Sergeant Smith served his community as Deposit Village Trustee and Mayor of Deposit.

As Mayor, his leadership helped the small Deposit community survive and recover from the devastating flood of 2006. Organizing the fire department, village public works, police and EMS to ensure safety and support for community members, Staff Sergeant Smith also arranged for FEMA applications to be taken door-to-door to ensure all applications for disaster assistance were returned to the federal government in record time.

After retiring from the National Guard in 2014, Staff Sergeant Smith returned to local government and was instrumental in the creation of Eastern Broome Emergency Services, which combined EMS services for multiple rural areas by sharing resources, improving coverage and reducing costs.

Staff Sergeant Smith passed away in 2018 at age 50, leaving a legacy of community-minded leadership and service, including 22 years of military service, eight years in local government and 30 years of marriage.



**WILLIS W. SMITH IS NAMED TO
THE NEW YORK STATE VETERANS' HALL OF FAME
BY SENATOR FREDERICK J. AKSHAR II**

