



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pamela Helming

Kenneth Winkler Named 2023 Inductee to New York State Senate Veterans Hall of Fame

PAMELA HELMING November 2, 2023

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Senator Helming with Kenneth Winkler and his wife, Olga.

At her November 2nd ceremony honoring local Veterans, Senator Helming announced that Kenneth W. Winkler is the 54th District's 2023 Inductee to the New York State Senate Veterans Hall of Fame.

Kenneth Winkler proudly served in the U.S. military for 22 years. From 1962-1966, he served with the Air Force in Vietnam. In 1969, he joined the Army, receiving his wings and warrant officer bars, and advanced flight training on Huey helicopters.

Between 1970-1975, Mr. Winkler served in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Germany before returning to the U.S. and training as an Instrument Examiner and Warrant Officer. From 1986-1990, he served numerous missions in Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, the Philippines, and Zaire.

On February 28, 1971, Mr. Winkler earned the prestigious Distinguished Flying Cross for “heroism while participating in aerial flight” and for “voluntary action above and beyond the call of duty” as a pilot and gunner of an AH-1G armed helicopter supporting a battalion of ARV troops under siege in Laos. Mr. Winkler flew to the friendly position under challenging conditions and forced the enemy to retreat. Ultimately continuing his attack under intense anti-aircraft fire, Mr. Winkler countered with suppressive fire and destroyed the enemy emplacements.

Mr. Winkler retired as CW4 Master Aviator Instructor/Examiner in 1985. He continued flying for government agencies in Central America, Africa, the Philippines, and West Indies until 1990. During his career, Mr. Winkler amassed more than 10,000 flight hours as a pilot, instrument examiner, and flight instructor in both fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft.

Mr. Winkler has received dozens of awards for his military service, including: four Bronze Stars; 34 Air Medals; three Meritorious Service Medals; the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Ribbon with Device; Army Commendation Medal with two Bronze Oak Leaf Clusters; New York State Conspicuous Service Cross and Conspicuous Service Star; and, a Humanitarian Service Medal for assisting during an earthquake in Naples, Italy in 1980.

An accomplished three-sport athlete, Mr. Winkler received an athletic scholarship to Hobart College in 1957. He was inducted into the Victor Central Schools Athletic Hall of Fame in 2004. Mr. Winkler has been an active member of American Legion-James Cooke Post 931 for over 20 years.

He met his wife, Olga, while serving in Germany. In 1975, they wed at First United Methodist Church in Canandaigua. Kenneth and Olga have three children: Lea, Caroline, and Kurt.