



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

Harckham Commemorates National Vietnam War Veterans Day at State Capitol

PETE HARCKHAM March 28, 2024

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State Sen. Pete Harckham in the middle with (l-r) State Sen. Jessica Scarcella-Spanton, chair of the Senate Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs Committee, and State Sen. Shelley B. Mayer, surrounded by Vietnam War veterans outside the Senate

Albany, NY – New York State Senator Pete Harckham commemorated National Vietnam War Veterans Day at the State Capitol yesterday by introducing a resolution to the full Senate and welcoming a contingent of local Vietnam War veterans in attendance from the 40th Senate District and other Hudson Valley communities.

In entering his resolution, Harckham noted that the State of New York “wishes to show its Vietnam veterans the respect and appreciation they deserve but did not always get when they returned home.”

National Vietnam War Veterans Day is commemorated each year on March 29. To see a video of Harckham introducing the Vietnam War Veterans Day resolution in the State Senate, click [here](#).

In his remarks, Harckham noted that more than three million Americans served their country in the Vietnam War, and over 58,000 sacrificed their lives. Today, the names of those 58,318 lives lost are forever engraved in the black granite panels of the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C.

“Today we pay homage to the brave men and women who served in the Vietnam War, knowing full well that they served with tremendous courage and sacrifice,” said Harckham. “Unfortunately, our nation did not display those sentiments when these war veterans came home; they were not always welcomed home or treated well. The Vietnam veterans took it upon themselves to take care of each other; and they took it upon themselves to teach our nation that we would never forget the succeeding generation of American warriors who came back—and we thank you for that.”

Harckham outlined some of the State Legislature’s recent achievements focusing on the well-being of veterans, including the continued financial backing for the Pfc. Joseph P. Dwyer Peer 2 Peer Veterans Support Program, now available statewide, plus the creation of Council of Equity within the Office of Addiction Services and Supports to represent previously underrepresented populations, including veterans.

Additionally, Harckham mentioned his 2021 law, which arose from a suggestion made at a meeting of the veterans' advisory group he instituted in his Senate district. This law ensures all veterans and their family members are given the benefits and special treatment they deserve at hospitals, primary care facilities, nursing homes, assisted living residences and homeless shelters—all accomplished with a single question: Have you or anyone in your household served in the military?

The Vietnam War veterans who traveled to Albany as guests of Harckham were Michael Bergin and Joseph Manna from Somers, who served in the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy, respectively; Thom Newman, a retired U.S. Army Major from Katonah; Jim McCarthy from Patterson; Antonio Costella from Amawalk; Dan Morea, deputy director of the Yonkers Veterans Services Agency; Robert Everett, Jr. and Melvin Satchell from Yonkers; Lu Caldara from Ossining; Chester Edwards, executive director of the Westchester County Veterans Alliance and a board member of Hudson Valley Honor Flight who resides in Port Chester; Bob Anderson, Bill Tuttle, Frank Pusatere and Joseph Martinelli from Croton-on-Hudson; Tom Brady and James Mecca from Yorktown Heights; Anthony Nazzaro from Shenorock; Brenda Ephraim from Mahopac; Eugene Gallagher from Carmel; and Rob Rottkamp, Harry Sherblom and Andrew Parr from Brewster.

This year was the twelfth anniversary of National Vietnam Veterans Day, which was proclaimed by President Barack Obama back in 2012.

From the time the United States carried out its first combat mission against the Viet Cong on January 12, 1962 until when the last American troops left Vietnam on March 29, 1973, more than three million Americans served their country, and more than 58,000 sacrificed their lives during the war. Among US service men and women, 300,000 were wounded, 75,000 permanently disabled and 1,200 remain missing and unaccounted for.

James Mecca, an Army Specialist E-4 who was in Vietnam in 1971-1972, said, “I want to personally thank Senator Harckham for his dedication to Vietnam veterans,” said James Mecca, an Army Specialist E-4 who was in Vietnam in 1971-1972. “It is evident that he cares for all veterans throughout New York State. As a Vietnam veteran, we have not always been shown support. I am truly proud of the respect we were shown today.”

Dan Morea, an Army Specialist E-5 during the Vietnam War and now a service officer with the Westchester County Veterans Service Agency, said, “I returned home from my service in the Vietnam War in May 1969, and, like many veterans of the war, suffered from the lack of recognition and appreciation for my service, and the inability of veterans’ organization to help me integrate back to normal life. All of this affected me socially, but since then I have worked proudly with other Vietnam veterans to make sure all veterans get benefits they deserve and proper recognition as well. I have also taken on leadership roles in the American Legion and work closely with state legislators to ensure due process and justice for all veterans. I appreciate Senator Harckham’s continuing efforts in honoring Vietnam veterans for their service and making sure our voices are heard.”

Brenda Ephraim, an Army E-3 Specialist, said, “It was an honor for me to join with my fellow Vietnam veterans on the trip to the State Capitol. The camaraderie was great, and the tour was very educational. I was moved by the efforts put forth by Senator Harckham and his team in acknowledging the sacrifices made that so many of us made that have allowed us to enjoy the freedom we continue to have. This trip will strengthen us and open doors for future communications. In this busy world in which we reside, it is encouraging to know that there are those who care and those who we can care for.”

Michael Bergin, an Airman First Class in the Air Force who served in the Vietnam War from 1962-1966, said, “This was a wonderful ceremony and trip to the State Capitol. I had a tear in my eye after hearing all the speeches from the elected officials. It was great to be with my comrades from the war. Part of our creed is we never leave a fallen comrade behind—and

they certainly did not. Everyone on the trip appreciated Senator Harckham getting us together and honoring us. We had a great time.”