



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

William Larkin

## Celebrating Memorial Day

[WILLIAM J. LARKIN JR.](#) June 5, 2005

Memorial Day Weekend marks the unofficial start of Summer, a weekend where families travel, have that first picnic, go out to the lake, or head to the stores to take advantage of the latest sales. While the weekend may afford us a wonderful opportunity to gather with family and friends, we must remember what this holiday is really about -- thinking of and honoring those who sacrificed their lives for their country.

An official Federal holiday for the last three decades, the origins of Memorial Day go back to the years just following the Civil War. In the spring of 1866 localities across the nation held tributes to those who lost their lives in the war. In 1868, Maj. Gen. John A. Logan -- the head of the Grand Army of the Republic, an organization of Union veterans -- established Decoration Day to give people across the nation an opportunity to decorate the graves of war veterans. After World War I, the day was expanded to honor those who have died in all American Wars, not just the Civil War and in 1971, Memorial Day was declared a national holiday by an act of Congress.

With American troops in Iraq and other stations of the world fighting for our nation and for our freedom, it is important that we reflect on the meaning of Memorial Day and remember the efforts and sacrifices of all of our veterans and military personnel -- past and present.

As Memorial Day approaches, I am looking forward to the creation of the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor, to be located in the Town of New Windsor. The Hall will recognize the more than two million brave American men and women who have been killed or wounded in combat. This state-of-the-art 21st century facility will preserve the stories of ordinary men and women and the extraordinary sacrifices they made for this nation. During this Memorial Day season I urge you to join our campaign for the Purple Heart Hall of Honor. Call my Albany or New Windsor office for more information about what you can do: (518) 455-2770; (845) 567-1270.

New York State is home to about 1.2 million veterans. There have been approximately 90,000 Purple Heart recipients from New York. It is both our responsibility and privilege to give appropriate recognition to those veterans who served our country and to honor those who bravely lost their lives.