



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Assembly Needs to Pass Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Legislation

THOMAS P. MORAHAN October 29, 2009

| ISSUE: **MENTAL HEALTH**



Several weeks ago we commemorated the eighth anniversary of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack on our nation. At that time, during the Senate session in Albany, I introduced a bill which was passed by the New York State Senate which would include post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among the list of biologically based mental illnesses to be covered under Timothy's Mental Health Parity Law ([S.185](#)) This legislation includes persons exposed to acts of terrorism, as well as veterans who have been in combat under Timothy's Law.

According to a study issued in 2007, twenty percent of troops, about 300,000, returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan report symptoms of PTSD, depression, or severe traumatic brain injury. As the Ranking

Member of the Senate's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Committee, this landmark legislation includes language to ensure that victims of violent crime, childhood abuse, and those exposed to catastrophic events are included under the umbrella of Timothy's Law.

PTSD is an anxiety disorder that can occur following the experience or witnessing of a traumatic event. A traumatic event is a life-threatening event such as military combat, natural disasters, terrorist incidents, serious accidents, or physical or sexual assault in adult or childhood. PTSD is a real problem and can happen at any age. It affects nearly eight million American adults. A number of important physiological differences have been found in individuals diagnosed with PTSD compared with individuals without the disorder which support the inclusion of PTSD within the list of biologically based mental illnesses that are covered under NYS's Mental Health Parity Law.

While the prevalence of PTSD in the general population is small, it is relatively high when you look at certain subgroups of the population that are affected by it. Veterans who have been in combat, victims of violent crimes such as rape, survivors of childhood abuse, and persons exposed to catastrophic events such as natural disasters or terrorism all suffer from much higher rates of PTSD.

Additionally the symptoms are very real and debilitating. Left untreated, PTSD is highly associated with serious medical ailments leading to significant physical debilitation and even premature death. Further, suicide risk for PTSD patients is considerably higher than among unaffected populations.

It is critical that our returning veterans, victims of other violent crimes and others suffering from PTSD are afforded the care they need through their insurance coverage to address their disease. That is why I am urging Members of the Assembly to support this important legislation.