



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Lee M. Zeldin

## Zeldin to Commission Blue Ribbon “John P. Jennings” Veterans’ Advisory Panel

LEE M. ZELDIN February 7, 2011

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### **Zeldin to Commission Blue Ribbon “John P. Jennings” Veterans’ Advisory Panel**

*Board to Focus on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other Veterans’ Issues*

Albany, NY- In keeping with his campaign promises, Army Veteran and State Senator Lee M. Zeldin (R, C, I- Shirley) today announced the creation of the John P. Jennings Veterans’ Advisory Panel to assist with the creation of legislation to help our Veterans community.

“To further fulfill my campaign promises, I am assembling this advisory panel to assist me in creating important legislation for veterans and their families,” said Zeldin.

The panel will be named in honor of Infantryman John P. Jennings, a Suffolk County resident who recently passed away on January 10, 2011. John long struggled with the effects of PTSD following a deployment to Iraq from September 2004 to October 2005. Zeldin recently presented Jennings’ family with the New York State Liberty Medal, the highest award given by the New York State Senate for citizenry.

“John was a man who sacrificed so much of himself in Iraq, lost many of the men under his leadership, and suffered injuries that haunted him until the end. He was fiercely loyal and patriotic to his core,” said Zeldin.

Zeldin, who is currently a Captain in the U.S. Army Reserves, formerly served on active duty as a paratrooper with the Army's elite 82nd Airborne Division and XVIII Airborne Corps at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Zeldin deployed to Iraq with the 82nd Airborne Division in the Summer of 2006.

“I have had the privilege to serve alongside my heroes as a member of the U.S. military. The amount of pride I feel for America's Constitution, freedoms and liberties drove me to sign up for the ROTC program over twelve years ago. That pride motivates me to continue my service today,” continued Zeldin.

Senator Zeldin will be seeking the advice of the John P. Jennings Panel to develop a legislative agenda for Veteran’s Initiatives.

“One of the primary objectives of the advisory panel will be to help design the PFC Joseph Dwyer Program (JDP), which I proposed during last year’s campaign. Many military veterans in New York State need assistance with diagnosis and treatment of Post Traumatic

Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). The National Institute of Mental Health defines PTSD as "an anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal in which grave physical harm occurred or was threatened. Traumatic events that may trigger PTSD include violent personal assaults, natural or human-caused disasters, accidents, or military combat," said Zeldin.

PFC Dwyer enlisted in the Army within days of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. He served with courage and honor in Iraq, but returned home with PTSD. On June 28, 2008, this illness took his life, leaving his wife, Matina, and their two year old daughter, Meagan, to live the remainder of their lives without him.

The PFC Joseph Dwyer Program would be a statewide multi level initiative to assist service members, their families and friends, with the challenges of diagnosis and treatment of PTSD and TBI.

Zeldin is a member of several Senate committees to be impacted by the initiatives designed by the Jennings Panel. These include the Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs Committee, Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Committee and the Aging Committee.

Senator Zeldin's office will be reaching out to veterans and veterans' organizations to request participation with the Jennings Advisory Panel. To request to be a member of the panel, please contact Senator Zeldin's office at [zeldin@nysenate.gov](mailto:zeldin@nysenate.gov) or 631-360-3356.