



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Dean G. Skelos

## Senate Passes Legislation to Support Veterans

DEAN G. SKELOS March 15, 2011

### *Bills Would Protect The Rights and Legacies of Service Men and Women*

The New York State Senate today passed legislation that would significantly enhance the protection of property, rights and services available to current and former military personnel. The seven bills would build upon the Senate's ongoing commitment to increase support for veterans and their families.

"Our service men and women are the best of America and the best of New York - they deserve no less than to enact this legislation," Chairman of the Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs Committee Senator Greg Ball (R-C, Pawling) said. "This package of bills addresses real needs and concerns of individuals who have served and sacrificed for freedom and county. I hope the Assembly will join the Senate in passing these bills because it is simply the right and just thing to do for our veterans."

"Today's package of bills focuses on just a few of the challenges that are facing service men and women while in active duty and after having returned home," Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos said. "By advancing these bills and ensuring that votes will be counted, property and veterans cemeteries will be protected and our support will continue as they transition from active service, we are preserving their legacy and reaffirming our commitment to help those who put their lives on the line for freedom."

The veterans legislative package acted upon today includes:

- Bill S.2421 sponsored by Senator Ball would require that absentee or military ballots of any active duty service member be counted even if such service member dies before the date of the election for which it was cast.
- Bill S.2424A sponsored by Senator Ball establishes the New York State Veterans Cemetery Act and provides the mechanism for the establishment of a New York State Veterans Cemetery Program;
- Bill S.3484 sponsored by Senator Ball extends provisions establishing a recruitment incentive and retention program in the form of a tuition reimbursement for certain active members of the New York Army National Guard, Air National Guard and Naval Militia;
- Bill S.1728 sponsored by Senator William Larkin (R-C, Cornwall-on-Hudson) would create the crime of “Cemetery Desecration of a Veteran” and also allows community service to be provided for desecrated cemeteries as a condition for probation or conditional release;
- Bill S.1504 sponsored by Senator Larkin would prohibit the unauthorized sale of veterans’ commemorative property, including artifacts, statues or other physical memorabilia from a cemetery, in order to preserve history and provide for the continued reverence of those who faithfully served our country;
- Bill S.1431 sponsored by Senator Stephen Saland (R-I-C, Poughkeepsie) directs the Adjutant General to present a United States flag to the person disposing of the body of a member of the National Guard, Air National Guard or Naval Militia who dies in the service of their state and nation; and

· Bill S.656 sponsored by Senator David Valesky (D, Oneida) allows the state Department of Environmental Conservation to organize fishing events that provide physical or emotional rehabilitation for veterans or active duty members of the armed forces without the need for veterans or active duty members to obtain fishing licenses.

These bills are in addition to legislation passed earlier today (S.3901) and sponsored by Senator Lee Zeldin (R,C,I- Shirley), that would limit protests and help prevent disruptions at military funerals.