



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Dean G. Skelos

## Senate Celebrates Memorial Day WITH Passage of Bills to Help Veterans and Active Military

DEAN G. SKELOS May 25, 2011

To commemorate New York State's upcoming Memorial Day observance, the state Senate took time to honor current and former military service members, and especially those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Nine bills focused on supporting veterans and active service members were passed. Two bills in particular, sponsored by Senator Michael H. Ranzenhofer (R-C-I, Amherst), provide important parental rights protections for military service men and women. Bill S.3228 prevents the courts from considering the potential for a military service deployment as a detrimental factor when determining parental custody of a child. So long as the parent provides a suitable child care plan for the period of deployment, under the bill, the courts would not be able to infringe upon that parent's custodial rights, helping more families of service members to stay together.

Bill S.3192 allows a parent to designate a short-term military service guardian, when necessary, during the period in which a custodial parent will be on active military duty. This

guardian would only be designated if there is not another parent who has joint custody of the child, a parent whose parental rights have not been terminated, whose whereabouts are known, and who is willing to make the day-to-day decisions for the child.

“America’s distinguished service men and women put their lives on the line to defend our nation and protect our freedoms,” Senator Ranzenhofer. “Service to their country should not be considered as a determining factor in deciding the custody of their children. Even more so, they should have peace of mind knowing that their son or daughter is with a short-term military guardian while they are deployed overseas. Senate bills S.3228 and S.3192 ensure the members of the U.S. Armed Forces are not discriminated against because of their military service and their children are safe and secure with a proper guardian.”

“The voluntary commitment and sacrifices our veterans and active service members have made to protect our country should be admired and respected -- not held against them when critical decisions, such as child care, are made,” Senate Majority Leader Dean G. Skelos said. “The bills we passed today will provide additional protections for the rights of New York’s veterans, as well as enhance the benefits available to them.”

The other bills acted on today include:

- S. 5337, sponsored by Senator John DeFrancisco (R-C-I, Syracuse), establishes a crime for the commercial use of the name, image, or likeness of any current or former member of the

armed forces or the state militia. Some interest groups have exploited this information without the service member's or family's permission and this legislation seeks to prevent that misuse.

- S.193, sponsored by Senator George Maziarz (R-C, Newfane), allows certain disabled veterans to purchase a lifetime sportsman license for hunting and fishing at a reduced rate.

- S.824, sponsored by Senator Elizabeth Little (R-C-I Queensbury), gives disabled veterans access to certain restricted bodies of water through the use of float planes and with the creation of a permit system.

- S.3222, sponsored by Senator Ranzenhofer, provides for additional veteran real property owner exemptions when veterans are otherwise eligible, but not discharged from a current combat duty status.

- S.2497, sponsored by Senator Roy McDonald (R-C-I, Saratoga), creates a list of suitable documents which support a veteran's eligibility for real property tax exemptions.

- S.4569, sponsored by Senator Greg Ball (R-C, Pawling), ensures that all funds paid as rent for non-military use of an armory would continue to be paid into a special account that is used

to pay operating costs for New York Army National Guard armories statewide.

· S.656A, sponsored by Senator David Valesky (D-Oneida), allows the creation of free fishing events that provide physical or emotional rehabilitation for veterans or active duty service members. No fishing license would be required to participate.

The bills have been sent to the Assembly.