67th ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY A TIME TO MEMORIALIZE LOCAL HERO WHO FOUGHT

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On June 6th, 1944, the United States and our allies charged the beaches of France in the largest air, land, sea and military operation the world has ever known. The landing included over 5,000 ships, 11,000 airplanes, and over 150,000 service men. When it was over, the Allied Forces had suffered nearly 10,000 casualties; more than 4,000 were dead. This tremendous show of courage and sacrifice represents one of the most defining moments in our Nation's history. As mankind faced one of its darkest hours, the men who fought on D-Day

turned the tide of World War II and helped preserve liberty for future generations across the globe.

Tony DeTomaso of Auburn was one of those men. As a member of the 299th Combat Engineer Battalion, he was among the first wave of troops that landed on the beaches of Normandy during the invasion. Tony was only 19 when he and his fellow soldiers fought to clear the beaches so that Allied troops could set up their command posts. During the battle, six members of the 299th made the ultimate sacrifice and died fighting to liberate the world from tyranny and oppression.

Tony was a member of the greatest generation of Americans, soldiers who left their homes and loved ones to go overseas to fight and shed their blood in defense of world freedom. When I first met Tony several years ago, we discussed the tremendous sacrifices that were made by the 299th Engineer Combat Battalion during World War II. His devotion to his fellow veterans was inspiring, and I pledged that I would do all possible to help him ensure that these brave men receive the recognition they deserve so that future generations will know of their sacrifices.

Tony was instrumental in perpetuating the memory of our military heroes who served on D-Day. Every year on June 6th, he organized a reunion of the 299th Engineer Combat Battalion here in Auburn to commemorate our local veterans for their service and commitment on that fateful day.

Monday marks the 67th anniversary of D-Day and the first year that Tony will not be with us. He passed away on February 11th at the age of 86, but his legacy lives on as we gather once again to commemorate D-Day and reflect on the sacrifices our veterans have made to preserve our freedoms, protect our democracy, and secure a safer, more peaceful world.

Earlier this year, I was proud to author with Assemblyman Gary Finch and introduce a special, formal New York State Legislative Resolution honoring Tony's compassion, his courage and his many contributions to our community. It has been stated that memory is the most sincere form of honor. For years, Tony DeTomaso proudly kept the memory of D-Day and the 299th Combat Engineer Battalion alive in Auburn. Now, we celebrate his memory and his generous spirit that profoundly affected all those all he served with and befriended.

The young men who fought on D-Day were people like you and me. They had families, dreams and hopes for the future. These courageous Americans, when called upon to protect our country, served with honor, dignity and valor. There is no greater debt of honor we owe than that which we owe to our veterans. To the servicemen who risked their lives, and those who paid the ultimate price, please know we will never forget.