



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shirley L. Huntley

## Help Heal Our Veterans

SHIRLEY L. HUNTLEY March 11, 2012

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**News From New York State**

**Senator Shirley L. Huntley**

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**\*PRESS RELEASE\***

### **Senator Huntley Passes Legislation to Help Heal Our Veterans**

#### **Law gives the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services the Responsibility of Providing Recovery Services for our Veterans**

(Albany, NY) Senator Shirley L. Huntley (D-Jamaica) announced that the New York State Senate passed legislation, S.4466-A, to define the responsibilities of the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) to provide recovery services to our Veterans who are returning home for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

“Veterans risk their lives to defend our freedom every day,” Senator Huntley explained. “New York State needs to be proactive in ensuring our Veterans receive the proper care they deserve regarding any conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or alcohol

and substance abuse.”

Under the new law, the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, the Division of Veteran Affairs and the Office of Mental Health (OMH) will work together to ensure specialized treatment services are available to our Veterans.

This was an important issue for Senator Huntley due to the fact that St. Albans Veterans Hospital is in her district. Providing care to veterans and services related to substance abuse and mental health will ensure they receive comprehensive treatments. Thousands of veterans visit the hospital every year, and rely on a myriad of services that will ultimately improve their health and well-being.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse performed a study of Army soldiers screened 3 to 4 months after returning from deployment to Iraq showed that;

- 27 percent met criteria for alcohol abuse and were at increased risk for related harmful behaviors like drinking and driving, and using illicit drugs.
- Research findings highlight the need to improve screening and access to care for alcohol-related problems among service members returning from combat deployments.
- Drug or Alcohol use frequently accompanies mental health problems and was involved in 30 percent of the Army's suicide deaths from 2003 to 2009
- 45 percent of non-fatal suicide attempts from 2005 to 2009.

The senator continued, “New York State needs to be proactive with helping our Veterans receive the proper care they need to recover from any medical or mental conditions they may be suffering from as they return home. This bill goes to great lengths in aiding these hero’s and ensuring their lives at home are just as prosperous as when they left.”

The bill is awaiting action in the assembly.