



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Lee M. Zeldin

Senators Carlucci, Zeldin and Ball and Westchester County Executive Astorino and Putnam County Executive Odell Announce the Expansion of the PFC Joseph Dwyer PTSD Peer-to-Peer Veterans Counseling program To Westchester, Rockland and Putman Counties

LEE M. ZELDIN May 2, 2013

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Senator Lee M. Zeldin (R-C-I, Shirley) today joined Senators David Carlucci (D-Rockland/Westchester), Chairman of the Senate Mental Health Committee and Greg Ball (R,C,I-Patterson), Chairman of the Senate Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs Committee as well as Westchester County Executive Robert P. Astorino and Putman County Executive Mary Odell to announce funding for the expansion of the PFC Joseph Dwyer PTSD Peer-to-Peer Veterans Counseling program to Westchester, Rockland and Putman Counties. The continuation and expansion of the PFC Joseph Dwyer PTSD Peer-to-Peer Veterans Counseling program was approved as part of the 2013-14 state budget.

A top priority for Senator Zeldin since first being elected, the Dwyer Program provides “peer-to-peer” counseling between veterans who personally understand the effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Since its inception in last year’s budget, the program has been operating successfully in four test counties: Suffolk, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Jefferson. At Senator Zeldin’s request, this innovative direct counseling program will now be funded again for Suffolk County veterans, those in the other pilot counties, as well as for veterans in seven additional counties: Nassau, Erie, Onondaga, Orange, Putnam, Rockland and Westchester.

"This is a huge a win for our veterans," said Senator Zeldin, a Major in the U.S. Army Reserves. "Countless veterans have already benefitted from this excellent program and now even more will have access to this service. I want to thank all of my Senate colleagues who joined me in the fight to ensure that this critical funding was included in this year's state budget. Their support was instrumental in this effort and will greatly assist our troops who have served our country honorably and are now struggling to make the adjustment back into day-to-day life."

Senator David Carlucci (D-Rockland/Westchester) Chairman of the Senate's Mental Health Committee, said, "When it comes to treating veterans with PTSD, it's clear that we need to continue investing in novel approaches that deliver positive results. The PFC Joseph Dwyer PTSD Peer-to-Peer Veterans Counseling program is exactly that type of initiative. By providing counseling services from a brother or sister in arms, the Dwyer program breaks down barriers between counselor and patient and provides the type of care that many veterans truly need. I'm pleased that we're bringing this program to Rockland County, where I know that many of the region's veterans and families will benefit."

"With the rising number of returning veterans suffering from ailments like traumatic brain injury, we must do everything in our power to give our returning troops the services and programs that they need," said Senator Greg Ball, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs. "The expansion of the Dwyer program to Putnam, Westchester and other counties in the state will allow even more veterans to receive these services to help them transition back into civilian life

"Westchester needs to do everything it can to help our veterans get the care they need. We look forward to working with the state to get this new program started in Westchester. I commend Senators Zeldin, Carlucci and Ball for their dedication to our veterans who served our country selflessly and courageously," said Westchester County Executive Robert P. Astorino.

"The expansion of the PFC Joseph Dwyer PTSD Peer-to-Peer Veterans Counseling Program to include Putnam County is simply wonderful news. PTSD has been underplayed as a serious injury of war for far too long. The sooner we can initiate programs such as this to help our veterans recover, the better," said Putman County Executive Mary Ellen Odell.

The PFC Joseph Dwyer PTSD Peer-to-Peer Veterans Counseling program will be administered by the Veterans and Mental Health Departments of Westchester, Rockland and Putman Counties.