



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Lee M. Zeldin

## Honoring Our Veterans

LEE M. ZELDIN November 13, 2013

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### **Honoring Our Veterans:** *A Column by Senator Lee Zeldin*

A distinctly American tradition, Veterans Day serves as an important reminder to honor and thank all of those who have sacrificed so much to preserve American freedom and liberty.

As a Major in the Army Reserves, I understand and deeply appreciate the service of all of my brothers and sisters in uniform. Their strength, selflessness and determination never cease to amaze me. On this day especially, let's take time to let our veterans know how very grateful we are for their selfless service.

The extent of that service often goes far beyond time spent on the battlefield. Every day, these honorable men and women return home, often carrying the physical and mental wounds of war. They are expected to reenter our communities seamlessly and adjust back into civilian life. However, the fact of the matter is, even with the unyielding support of their loved ones, countless soldiers are returning home from deployment with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Too often, many are suffering in silence.

I firmly believe that we owe it to our veterans, as a measure of civic duty, to ensure that they receive the highest level of care so that they are able to enjoy the freedom they fought so hard to protect. This is why upon taking office, I, along with many local leaders and vets, commissioned the John P. Jennings Veterans' Advisory Panel, with the purpose of crafting a framework for an initiative known as the PFC Joseph Dwyer Program.

The Dwyer Program provides peer-to-peer counseling for our returning veterans, providing a forum for them to work through their experiences with other veterans who know and understand all that they've been through. The program offers a vital service to veterans in transition.

After proving successful in four test counties, I was proud to secure funding in last year's state budget to expand the program to seven more counties across New York. Initiating and increasing access to the Dwyer Program has been one of my proudest legislative accomplishments to date.

Today and every day, I hope you will join me in honoring our veterans and recognizing the sacrifices they have made willingly both on and off the battlefield.

God Bless Our Nation's Veterans!