



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Senator Young Applauds New Law for Service-Disabled Veterans

CATHARINE YOUNG May 12, 2014

| ISSUE: **MILITARY, VETERANS**



For Release: Immediate, May 12, 2014

Senate Bill 6865/Assembly Bill 9135 Signed into Law

Sets Aside Six Percent of State Contracts for Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Businesses

ALBANY - Today, Governor Cuomo signed into law legislation (S.6865/A.9135) passed by the New York State Senate and Assembly and co-sponsored by Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I-Olean) that will award more state contracts to disabled veterans who have been injured

while honorably serving our country.

The “Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Act” will ensure that New York State’s disabled veterans are better able to compete for and procure valuable state contracts. The new law, which takes effect immediately, requires that six percent of all New York State contracts be set aside for service-disabled veterans.

“Our veterans have given so much for us and they deserve more in return. Far too many come home after serving our country so admirably and are not even able to find employment. We have to do more to change that, and this important law is one way we can offer our support and ensure that when our veteran heroes return to civilian life they have opportunities waiting for them and they can succeed and thrive in New York State.

“I have visited Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. and seen the injuries that our brave heroes have sustained while serving our country. Many have given arms and legs and will carry the scars of battle with them for the rest of their lives. We need to make sure they have hope for their future and are able to receive the support and opportunities they need,” said Senator Young.

Spc. Brandon Rethmel of Olean was one of the wounded warriors Senator Young visited while at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. He was severely injured in a skirmish only 14 days after being stationed in Afghanistan in 2009, losing his right leg and suffering serious wounds to his arm and abdomen.

“It’s for heroes like Specialist Rethmel that we passed this legislation. He is a true inspiration and we must always remember the sacrifices of the men and women in our armed services. We have a duty to show them how much we appreciate what they have done for us and always assure them that their sacrifices are not forgotten,” said Senator Young.

The set-aside is very similar to a highly successful three percent preference that the federal government currently offers for disabled veterans.

“Veteran unemployment rates are disproportionately high and veterans represent the most under-utilized workforce in the country,” said Senator Young.

Recent figures reveal that unemployment rates among post-9/11 disabled veterans are around ten percent, significantly higher than the national average. And with one in seven veterans being self-employed or owning a small business, thousands of New York State veterans stand to benefit from the six percent set-aside. Of New York State’s 900,000 veterans, approximately 106,000 have service-connected disabilities.

“Our service-disabled heroes and brave veterans have given all for us. With this landmark law, we are honoring our promise to them and making sure they have the financial security, jobs, and resources needed to succeed in New York State.

“In serving in the military, our veterans have already received invaluable personal and professional development and experience. They have also demonstrated that they are ready and willing to selflessly dedicate themselves to serving others. Their strong work ethic, advanced training and skills, and dedication to a job well done are second to none.

“For our many service-disabled veterans, like Specialist Rethmel, the least we can do is make it possible for them to have better opportunities in New York State and as positive of a life as possible. They still have so much to offer and by giving them this opportunity to continue contributing to our state and society when they return from serving in the military, we will all become stronger.

“After passing this legislation in the State Senate in previous years without any progress in the State Assembly, I am ecstatic that this important bill has finally become law,” said

Senator Young.

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