



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

## Addabbo Bill to Provide Veteran Organizations WITH 120 Days to Remedy Violations Approved by State Senate

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR May 1, 2014

| ISSUE: **VETERANS**

**Queens, NY (May 1, 2014):** In order to help veterans' organizations avoid hefty, unaffordable fines for minor building and other code violations, State Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. has been advancing legislation (S.2962) to provide these groups with 120 days to fix problems before fines are assessed. The bill was recently approved by the full State Senate after clearing the Senate Consumer Protection Committee.

"Veterans' posts in our communities that serve the needs of former servicemen and servicewomen often have bars, kitchens and other facilities in their buildings which may fall under the jurisdiction of various municipal codes and agencies," Senator Addabbo said. "Sometimes, code violations are identified that the veterans' organizations don't know about, and certainly never intended, and they are slapped with heavy fines that they cannot afford to pay without closing down the facilities altogether. Given the value of these organizations to our communities, and the extraordinary work they do on behalf of veterans who have served our country, I believe they should be given a chance to make necessary changes before being fined."

The legislation was crafted by Senator Addabbo after a veterans' organization in his district was assessed almost \$5,000 in fines because it housed an ice machine and was therefore classified as a food establishment. The American Legion Post was also fined for failing to have a sink at an outdoor barbecue event.

"This warning period of 120 days would not apply to serious violations that cause an immediate threat to safety or health, or that violate the alcoholic beverage control law," said Senator Addabbo, who is the ranking Democratic member of the Senate Committee on Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs. "This legislation represents a good faith effort to aid veterans' organizations that had no intention of violating the law and that just need a bit of time to correct the problems identified. I think it's the least we can do for men and women who put their lives on the line for our country and on our behalf."

Senator Addabbo noted many veterans' organizations operate on a volunteer basis, with limited budgets, and do not receive a great deal of public funding support.

“Many groups depend on their own veteran membership to help keep their organizations afloat and big municipal fines could mean the difference between a post staying open or closing,” he said. “My legislation isn't looking to give any group a free ride – just to set up a reasonable period of time to allow veterans to rectify violations and continue serving their fellow servicemen and servicewomen.”

Now that the bill has passed the State Senate, it is under review by the Assembly Committee on Veterans Affairs. The legislation is sponsored in that house by Assemblyman Mike Miller.