



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

At Senior Symposium, Senator Kennedy Announces New Legislation to Save Seniors Money

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY July 15, 2014

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Over 300 senior citizens from the 63rd Senate District, covering Buffalo, Cheektowaga and Lackawanna, join Kennedy at outreach event to gain access to state agencies, local service-providers.

Kennedy presents state honors, the New York State Senate Liberty Medal, to World War II veterans from WNY.

CHEEKTOWAGA, N.Y. – Senator Tim Kennedy today held his annual Senior Symposium at the Pvt. Leonard Post VFW Post in Cheektowaga. Over 300 Western New York seniors

attended the event, which provided an opportunity to connect with various service providers and to secure answers to any questions they may have about state agencies or local organizations. Kennedy also outlined new initiatives he's pushing to support area seniors, and he presented state honors to local seniors who served valiantly in the armed forces during World War II.

Kennedy unveiled new legislation today that will save seniors money. His two proposals target property taxes and state fees – which remain onerous costs for seniors who live an independent lifestyle. Kennedy's legislation will cap property taxes for seniors at age 70, and waive driver's license renewal fees for seniors.

“As the cost of living rises, especially for Western New York's seniors, it is urgent that we find ways to help reduce costs that remain barriers to independent living,” said Senator Kennedy. “By holding the line on property taxes for seniors, we will help thousands of our neighbors make ends meet and afford to remain in their homes. This will strengthen our neighborhoods while showing that New York State understands how much local seniors have contributed to our communities.

“At the same time, driver's license renewal fees can present a challenge for seniors living on fixed incomes, and we should reduce the fee to zero for area seniors who've worked hard their entire lives to keep our state strong and prosperous,” Kennedy added.

Under Kennedy's legislation (S.6760), once a homeowner turns 70 years old, their property taxes would be held flat. The state would ensure that the amount a homeowner paid in property taxes at age 70 remains the amount they pay in their years ahead. Like the STAR program, homeowners will only be able to use this on their primary residence.

The legislation Kennedy is pushing to waive driver's license renewal fees for seniors (S.6136) would take effect when an individual turns 62 years old. It will eliminate the \$64.50 fee seniors pay to renew their Class D license.

Kennedy also renewed his push for stronger laws to prevent the financial exploitation of seniors, a growing epidemic that has been felt by thousands of seniors across our region and state. It's estimated that about 260,000 New York seniors became victims of elder abuse over the course of a recent year. This year, Kennedy's legislation (S.373) to toughen penalties against those who financially exploit seniors passed the Senate, and is awaiting action in the Assembly.

"New York State needs to get tough on those who try to scam, cheat and harm local seniors," Kennedy said. "The Senate has passed our legislation to strengthen the law against the financial exploitation of seniors, and now we need the Assembly to act."

Today, Kennedy also honored two local veterans who served our nation with high valor and great distinction during World War II. He awarded the New York State Senate's Liberty Medal, one of the state's highest honors, a distinction given to New York residents who have merited special commendation for exceptional, heroic, or humanitarian acts and achievements on behalf of their fellow New Yorkers.

Kennedy presented the Liberty Medal to Sergeant-Major William Webb of Buffalo, whose service started during World War II and continued through to 1974. Webb served in the 555th Infantry Battalion – which was known as the "Triple Nickles" and was the first all-black Airborne Unit. This year is the 70th Anniversary since the Triple Nickles were first activated in 1944 during World War II. The Triple Nickles guarded the lands of the American Northwest and would bravely jump into the burning forests to seek out and extinguish so-called balloon bombs, which were incendiary devices the Japanese would float across the

Pacific by taking advantage of the jet stream to try to start forest fires.

Kennedy also presented Staff Sergeant J. Donald Griffin of Cheektowaga, a World War II veteran, with a Liberty Medal today. Staff Sergeant Griffin was inducted into the State Senate's Veterans Hall of Fame at Kennedy's nomination this year. During his service as a ball turret gunner in the U.S. Air Force, Griffin's aircraft was shot down, and after he parachuted to the ground, he was forced to spend a year and a half as a prisoner of war. Following his military service, Griffin became very active with community service, and previously served as Commander of the Erie County American Legion. Mr. Griffin was recently awarded the American Legion New York State Department Commander's Award of Excellence.

About 30 agencies and organizations also participated in today's event. It served as a one-stop shop for seniors looking to connect with various service providers. Some of the free services that were available at Senator Kennedy's Senior Symposium included health screenings, fraud prevention, Erie County Senior Services, various state programs and services, and much more.

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Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate's 63rd District, which is comprised of the town of Cheektowaga, the city of Lackawanna and nearly all of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.

In the photo at the top of the page, Senator Tim Kennedy stands with (from left) Staff Sergeant J. Donald Griffin of Cheektowaga and Sergeant Major William Webb of Buffalo whom Kennedy honored today with the New York State Liberty Medal.