



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

## Griffo announces State Route 49 from Utica to Rome now named in honor of Vietnam Veterans

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO August 14, 2015

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UTICA – State Senator Joseph Griffo of Rome and Assemblyman Anthony Brindisi of Utica announce that a portion of State Route 49 has been designated to honor those who served our nation during the Vietnam War.

On Thursday, Governor Andrew Cuomo approved legislation sponsored by Griffo and Brindisi that names State Route 49 from the City of Rome to the City of Utica as the “Oneida

County Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway.”

Griffo and Brindisi pursued this designation on behalf of the Vietnam Veterans of America, Utica Chapter. Because the Vietnam War is one of the longest-lasting wars in American history that brought so many severe casualties, Griffo and Brindisi agree that it is important for the community to always recognize those who sacrificed themselves for our nation, as well as those who survived.

NOTE: A ceremony memorializing the newly designated Vietnam Veterans Highway will be scheduled at a later date.

**Griffo said:** “The Vietnam War transformed our nation, our citizens and our history in ways that we are still coming to terms with today. We will never be able to fully grasp the true impact that this bloody war had on all the lives of those young men and women who fought and returned home forever changed, along with the many heartbroken families who never saw their loved ones again. Words can never do justice to the genuine courage it took for each of our soldiers to face a relentless, brutal enemy, but their sacrifice is a measure of the selfless dedication our nation has always possessed to uphold our American ideals. And yet, these veterans have never received the respect and appropriate welcome home they have always deserved. The Oneida County Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway will ensure that we never forget those brave men and women who gave up so much of themselves for the sake of our nation.”

**Brindisi said:** “Many soldiers who served in Vietnam did not receive the recognition they deserved after they returned home from the conflict. Today, it is only fitting that their sacrifice and duty to our country should be commemorated, and this new highway designation will be a reminder to the thousands of people who travel Route 49 every day from Utica to Rome. It also is appropriate to note that the former Griffiss Air Force Base,

located just off Route 49, played a vital role in deploying soldiers to Southeast Asia. I want to thank Thomas Buono and other members of the Vietnam Veterans of America chapter in Utica for their assistance in getting this legislation passed.”

**Thomas J. Buono, President of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 944 in Utica said:** “On behalf of our organization, we are honored to have Route 49 designated for America’s Vietnam Veterans, especially for the more than 9,000 who served from Oneida County, and the 68 soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice. We want to thank Senator Griffo and Assemblyman Brindisi for their success in commemorating this highway during the year we mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Vietnam War.”

**Mary Wheeler, past president of American Gold Star Mothers and whose 19-year-old son, U.S. Marine Corps Pfc. Joseph Keith Wheeler of Utica, was killed in 1968 while serving in Vietnam, said:** “For all those who gave their lives and all those who served in the war, and for everyone who is serving now, I don’t think we can do enough to thank them. Our Vietnam veterans have worked very hard to make sure none of today’s veterans have to face what they faced upon returning home. We send our finest young men and women to war, and when they come back home they need to come back to a proud nation. I am just so pleased that these young men and women are beginning to be recognized for what they’ve done.”

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