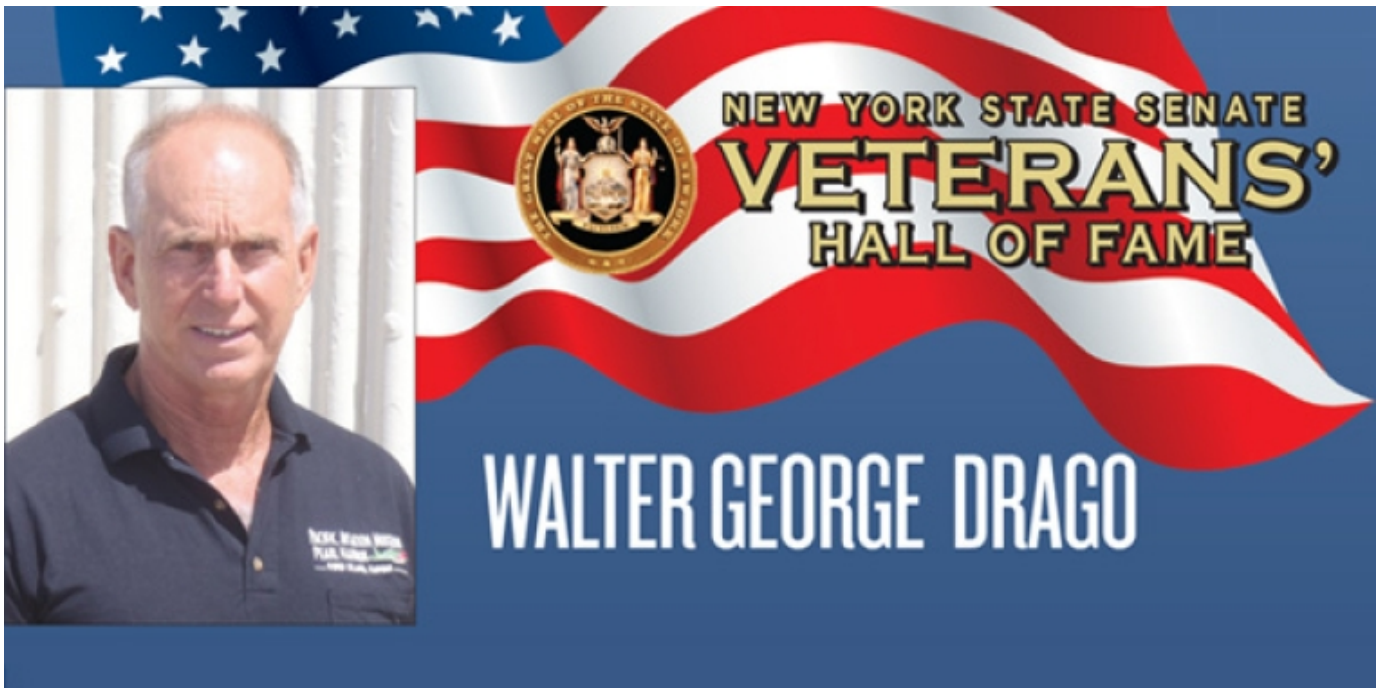




NEW YORK STATE SENATOR  
Kenneth P. LaValle

## Walter George Drago

KENNETH P. LAVALLE May 20, 2013



Walter George Drago

**Award:** Honoring Our Veterans

**Year:** 2013

Mr. Drago was raised in Yonkers, New York. He graduated from Lincoln High School in 1964, the Academy of Aeronautics with an Associated Applied Science degree in 1967 and Embry Riddle Aeronautical University (ERAU) for Professional Pilot training in 1968.

In 1968, Mr. Drago enlisted in the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Flight Program. He graduated with honors as a WO 1 Army Aviator and was selected to fly the Grumman OV-1 Mohawk. In March 1970, he was deployed to Viet Nam, and within a year, he flew over 220 combat missions in support of the U.S. and the Allied Forces in Viet Nam and other areas in the Southeast Asian region.

While in Viet Nam, Mr. Drago was promoted to CWO 2 and awarded the following decorations:

- The Distinguished Fly Cross for Heroism,
- Bronze Star Medal,
- Air Medals (13),
- Army Commendation Medal,
- Viet Nam Gallantry Cross and
- Civil Action Medal.

In 1972, Mr. Drago was released from active duty, and returned to ERAU to finish his education. He then moved to Atlanta and joined the Georgia Army National Guard. For the next 15 years, he continued to fly the OV-1 in support of the U.S. Army. While there, he received his Battlefield Commission. In 1988, he was transferred to the U.S. Army Reserve as

a Master Aviator and Captain. He was then promoted to Major and assigned to the U.S. Military Academy (USMA) at West Point, retiring as Lt. Col. USAR in 2002.

In his professional life, Mr. Drago was hired in 1974 by Fed Ex as a pilot. Rising through the ranks to Captain, he flew all over the world, eventually retiring in 2006. Since 2010, Lt. Col. Drago has been active with the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, assigned as Pilot in support of USCG missions. He continues to volunteer for the USMA.