



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

## New Laws for Our Vets

CATHARINE YOUNG November 11, 2014



This Veterans Day, let us remember our heroic servicemen and women who deserve our deepest respect, gratitude, and all of our support.

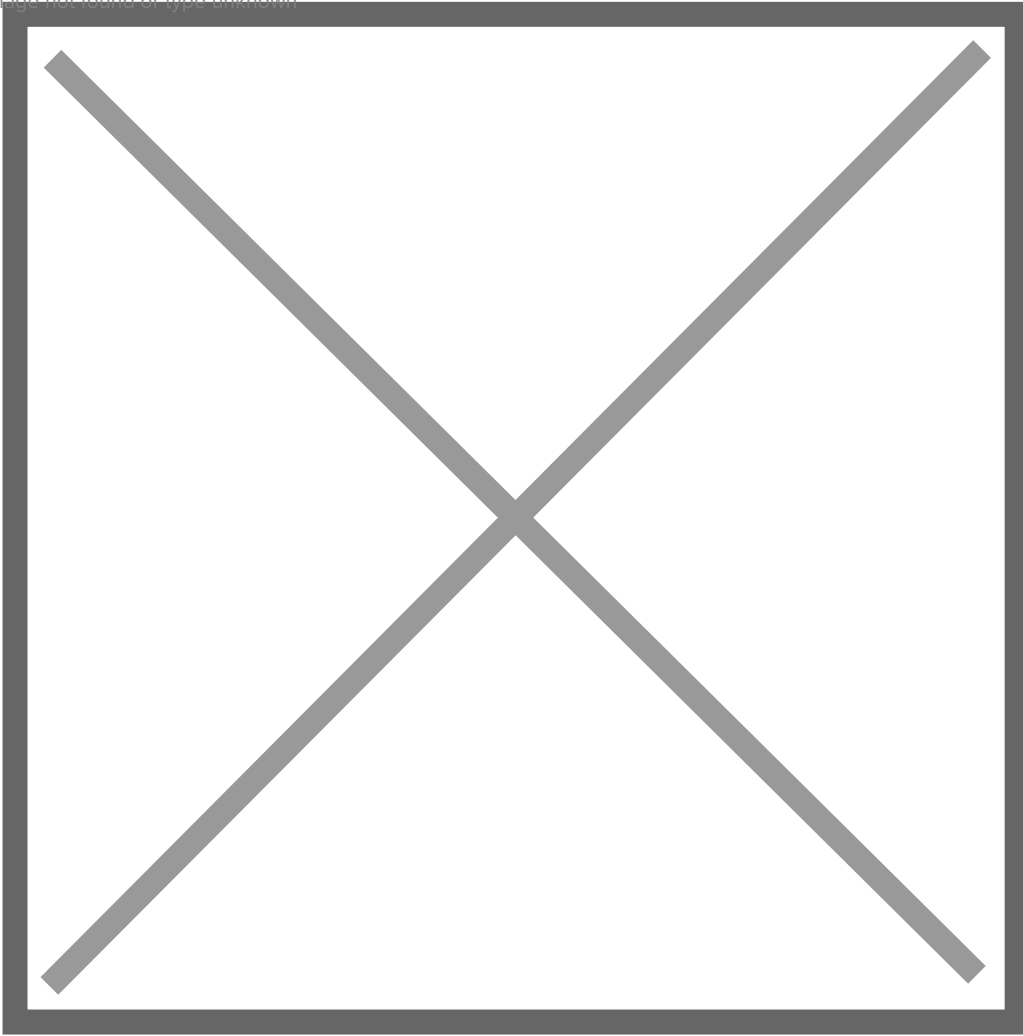
As your State Senator, standing up for our veterans is one of my greatest responsibilities and highest priorities.

One of my most important missions this year was addressing the disproportionately high unemployment rate for veterans. Our veterans are the most underutilized workforce in the country. Recent figures reveal that unemployment rates among post-9/11 disabled veterans are at about ten percent, significantly higher than the national average.

This must be fixed. Our veterans have given so much for us and deserve more in return. We have to ensure they have opportunities waiting for them when they come home and are able

to succeed and thrive in New York.

Image not found or type unknown



*Senator Young joining veterans in Ellington who gathered to recognize and honor their fellow vets.*

Last year, my Senate Republican colleagues and I passed new tax credits to encourage employers across the state to provide veterans with more job opportunities.

This was a good start, but more is needed, so this year we enacted the “**Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Act**,” a major initiative I have worked on ever since I joined the Senate in 2005. Modeled after a highly successful federal initiative, this new law sets aside six percent of all New York State contracts for service-disabled veterans and their businesses. (The federal set aside is just three percent.) Despite passage in the Senate year after year, we could not get the Assembly and Governor to agree to this landmark law until now. Our perseverance paid off and we can now open the door to rewarding new business opportunities for our most worthy citizens.

According to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, New York State is home to nearly 900,000 veterans, 600,000 of whom have served during periods of conflict. Roughly 106,000 of these veterans have service-connected disabilities and would qualify for this new contract set-aside.

I have visited Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. and seen firsthand the injuries that our brave servicemen and women have sustained while admirably serving our country. Many have given arms and legs and will carry the scars of battle with them for the rest of their lives.

These heroic individuals have sacrificed so much in service to our nation. This is one way we can offer our support and provide hope for a prosperous future in New York.

Information about this new program can be found at [veterans.ny.gov/business](https://veterans.ny.gov/business). Here, veteran businesses can begin the certification process and find answers to questions. They can also call the New York State Office of General Services (OGS) at 844-579-7570 or send an email to [veteransdevelopment@ogs.ny.gov](mailto:veteransdevelopment@ogs.ny.gov).

**Other important legislation we passed this year to help veterans and their families include bills that:**

- Ease the transition to a new school for children of moving military families;
- Lower the cost of higher education for veterans;
- Offer military family members more flexibility with professional licenses received in other states and jurisdictions;
- Strengthen the supplemental burial assistance provided by the state to military families when a servicemember dies in combat or from combat-related injuries;
- Provide \$3.1 million of funding for veterans assistance programs;
- Expand eligibility for the Gold Star Parent Annuity, removing the income requirement for receiving this \$500 annual state payment;
- Include veteran businesses within the state's Entrepreneurial Assistance Program that assists entrepreneurs in creating new start-ups;
- After establishing the Veterans Temporary Hiring Program that gives veterans priority in applying for temporary job opportunities with the State, we created a new website that is now active, [www.cs.ny.gov/vetportal](https://www.cs.ny.gov/vetportal), where veterans can apply for jobs in disaster assistance, transportation construction inspection, and highway maintenance, as well as in seasonal

work.

I am also working diligently to enact the “**Homes for Heroes**” program in New York State. Many of our disabled veterans cannot afford the costly home modifications they need to live safely, comfortably, and independently. Making sure we enact this program and our disabled veterans receive the financial assistance they need to make changes to their homes, such as wheelchair ramps or handrails, is a major priority of mine going forward.

These important initiatives are providing a boost to our veterans and sending a loud and clear message that we stand behind our servicemen and women and will do all we can to support our heroes.

Finally, veterans in need of help with issues like chronic pain, relationship problems, anxiety and depression, sleeplessness, or even homelessness can always call the VA's 24/7 confidential crisis line at 800-273-8255 or chat online at [www.veteranscrisisline.net](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net).

Please accept my best wishes and if there is ever anything I can do for our veterans, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Warmest regards,

Senator Cathy Young  
57th District