



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Sen. Griffo Announces Dedication Of Highway To Honor Vietnam War Veterans (includes video)

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO October 30, 2015



UTICA – State Senator Joseph Griffo and State Assemblyman Anthony Brindisi joined the New York State Department of Transportation on Monday, Oct. 26, 2015, to dedicate a portion of State Route 49 from Utica to Rome as the **Oneida County Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway**.

As this year marks the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War, today's ceremonial designation and march of veterans along Route 49 served to honor all the brave men and women who

fought in Vietnam, as well as those who gave their lives.

By clicking this link -- [A Vietnam Reflection](#) -- you can view a video narrated by Sen. Joseph Griffo that was played during this ceremony to reflect upon the circumstances surrounding the Vietnam War.

A recorded video of the highway dedication ceremony can also be viewed by clicking [HERE](#).

New York State Department of Transportation Commissioner Matthew J. Driscoll said: “Veterans are the heroes of our country and these new signs will remind motorists of the great sacrifices Vietnam veterans from the Utica/Rome area made so many years ago. Governor Cuomo signed this designation into law and we are proud to unveil the signs prior to Veterans Day.”

The highway was designated by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo earlier this year after legislation was introduced by Senator Joseph Griffo and Assemblyman Anthony Brindisi at the request of local Vietnam veterans.

Lieutenant Governor Kathleen Hochul said: “Today's ceremony was a powerful reminder of our continued obligation to remember and honor those who served during that difficult time in our nation's history. The message I heard today at the ceremony from many Vietnam Veterans was one of gratitude to the Governor, Senator Griffo and Assemblyman Brindisi for their leadership in trying to right the wrongs of the past generation. Fifty years late, these veterans finally received the welcome home they deserve from a grateful nation.”

Senator Joseph Griffo said: “When our brave men and women went off to fight the Vietnam War, no one could have anticipated the manner in which they would be received upon their return home. At the time, they were not recognized for what they really were – soldiers who

courageously fought and died in the name of America's ideals, and who paid a great price to endure the kind of horrors many of us could never imagine. To those men and women who gave so much of themselves on the battlefields, I am proud to dedicate the Oneida County Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway as a symbol of the respect and honor these individuals should have received many years ago."

Assemblyman Anthony Brindisi said: "Dedicating this highway for the thousands of men and women from Oneida County who served our country during the Vietnam conflict is the very least we can do to honor them. Many of them returned home from the war and did not receive the welcome they deserved. As we mark the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War, this is one way to say thank you for what they did to keep us safe. Now, the thousands of people who travel Route 49 every day between Utica and Rome will have the opportunity to reflect on the sacrifices these service members made for us."

Oneida County Executive Anthony Picente, Jr.: "This Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway will stand as a monument to all of those that have served during the Vietnam War. It is a testament to all of their bravery and courage in the face of adversity that most of us can only imagine."

President Thomas Buono of the Vietnam Veterans of America, Utica Chapter 944: "On behalf of the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 944 and all Vietnam era veterans, we are honored to have Route 49 between Utica and Rome designated as the Oneida County Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway. This is a proud honor and fitting remembrance for the more than 58,000 men and women from this country who gave the ultimate sacrifice, including 68 from Oneida County. There were more than 9,000 men and woman from Oneida County who served during the Vietnam War, so we would like to thank Senator Joseph Griffo and Assemblyman Anthony Brindisi for their efforts to bring us this recognition."

State Department of Transportation has installed two signs along State Route 49 – one at Utica-Marcy, the other at Rome-Floyd – noting the ceremonial designation.

The following are Sen. Griffo's remarks during the dedication ceremony:

Starting 50 years ago this year, the Vietnam War began to transform our nation, our citizens and our history in ways that we continue to struggle with today.

It was a difficult time to explain why so many of our young men and women were dying every day in a place, and under circumstances, very few Americans truly understood. It was an angry time, and sadly our nation directed that misplaced anger toward these soldiers upon their return home.

Many of you here today experienced all of this first-hand – you are real people who left a real part of yourself out there in those frightening jungles so long ago. You left your innocence, you left your spirits, and some of you left so much more. And many of you paid the ultimate sacrifice.

But none of you ever imagined you would also leave behind the respect this country rightfully owed you for the price you paid on our behalf.

For that, we are sorry.

Today, this march along Route 49 was the welcome home our Vietnam veterans should have received so long ago. And as we now dedicate the Oneida County Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway in your honor, this is our way of showing that your sacrifice was real, that your courage mattered, and for that we are forever grateful.

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