



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

## SENATOR HOYLMAN INTRODUCES “RESTORATION OF HONOR” ACT IN NYS SENATE TO ENSURE LGBT VETERANS GET THE BENEFITS THEY DESERVE

BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL November 10, 2015



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*Hoylman: “We need to do all we can to look after the well-being of our veterans – including our LGBT vets – whose service has helped make possible the liberties so many of us take for granted.”*

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NEW YORK – Coinciding with Veteran's Day on November 11, State Senator Brad Hoylman (D-Manhattan) introduced the Restoration of Honor Act in the New York State Senate. The bill, which is co-sponsored by State Senator Joseph P. Addabbo Jr. (D-Queens), would make veterans discharged because of their sexual orientation or gender identity eligible for a number of programs, services, and benefits available at the state level.

According to a report released by Senator Hoylman's office in May, at least 53 state benefits for veterans are directly contingent upon the discharge status of the veteran, potentially disqualifying service members discharged because of sexual orientation or gender identity from access to these resources. Since World War II an estimated 114,000 service members have been dishonorably discharged from the military as a result of sexual orientation.

"The fact that generations of LGBT veterans were dismissed from service is an indelible stain on our nation's history," **said Senator Hoylman.** "We shouldn't compound this historic injustice any longer by continuing to deprive these brave men and women of the benefits they rightfully earned by serving in the military."

The Restoration of Honor Act is similar to legislation introduced last year at the federal level by U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand that would correct the military records of veterans discharged because of their sexual orientation to reflect honorable service.

**United States Senator Kirsten Gillibrand said:** "Veterans who honorably served our nation should not be punished because of their sexual orientation. Our service members deserve to receive the recognition and benefits they earned for the sacrifice they made for our country. I'm pleased State Senator Hoylman is introducing this legislation on the state level and I'll continue to push for these reforms on the federal level."

"We all understand our profound duty to our veterans, to care for those who have borne the burden of safeguarding our nation's safety and honor. In addition, for the service men and women who have been discharged and disavowed for their sexual orientation or gender identity, our debt of gratitude remains unsettled. The Restoration of Honor Act is our down payment on this debt and I look forward to working with my colleague Senator Hoylman to ensure that each and every veteran is guaranteed the equal benefits that all our nation's heroes deserve," **said Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. (D-Howard Beach).**

Senator Hoylman continued: "Albany lawmakers have a duty to pass the Restoration of Honor Act, which will make veterans discharged because of sexual orientation or gender identity eligible for a host of important programs, services and benefits available at the state level. We need to do all we can to look after the well-being of our veterans – including our LGBT vets – whose service has helped make possible the liberties so many of us take for granted."

**Denny Meyer, Founder and President of the New York Chapter of American Veterans for Equal Rights said:** "The repeal of "Don't Ask Don't Tell" in 2011 was an historic step in recognizing the role that LGBT service members play in the defense our nation. But for generations, LGBT service members were forced from the military in dishonor and disgrace, simply because of who they were. They are denied their deserved benefits and the enjoyment of those very freedoms for which they served and sacrificed. American Veterans for Equal Rights is dedicated to guaranteeing those full and equal rights and benefits; and that's why we're thankful to Senator Hoylman for introducing the Restoration of Honor Act. The senator's bill, by guaranteeing state benefits to veterans unfairly discharged merely because of who they are, continues the unfinished business of protecting all our veterans."

"The repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell in 2011 brought an end to the discriminatory law barring gay and lesbian service members to serve openly in our military, but it did not undo the harm that was done to thousands of LGBT veterans who, despite their valiant service to our

country, had been less than honorably discharged because of who they are or who they loved,” said **Nathan M. Schaefer, Executive Director of the Empire State Pride Agenda**. “We commend State Senators Hoylman and Addabbo for introducing this important piece of legislation that will finally provide relief to many LGBT veterans whose discharge status, in many cases, has made them ineligible to receive much deserved and much-needed state services.”

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### 2015-S6087

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- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
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Enacts the New York State Restoration of Honor Act

November 06, 2015

In Senate Committee **Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs**

Sponsored by **Brad Hoylman-Sigal**

Do you support this bill?