



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

## Addabbo Co-Sponsors Senate Veterans Committee Roundtable

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR. March 1, 2016

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Howard Beach, NY (March 1, 2016) Together with other members of the Senate Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, and Homeland Security, NYS Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. recently held a veterans roundtable at the State Capitol to examine a variety of programs and services to aid New York's servicemen and women in finding and maintaining meaningful employment when they return home from their tours of duty.

"The news has been improving when it comes to veteran employment rates," said Addabbo, noting that the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics reported this past November that joblessness among the nation's veterans reached an all time low in October 2015. "But even though the unemployment rate for our country's veterans dropped to 3.9 percent – a significant drop from the 6.9 percent two years earlier – we still have a lot to do to ensure that our veterans are able to find good jobs, pursue higher education, participate in our economy and support their families when their military service comes to an end. That 3.9 percent unemployment rate still means there are about 422,000 former members of the armed services looking for work."

Participants in the roundtable discussion included State Division of Veterans Affairs, Office of General Services, Service-Disabled Veteran-owned Business Office, United States Department of Defense, NYS Director of Veteran Business Outreach, and a variety of

representatives from the City University of New York (CUNY), State University of New York (SUNY), State Department of Civil Service, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), labor unions and private businesses. United States Army Colonel Kevin Kelvey, the district manager for Starbucks, spoke at length regarding the company's ongoing efforts to recruit veterans, aid them and their families with higher education and health insurance and find them jobs, in such areas as construction, within Starbucks.

"This roundtable offered an opportunity for a very valuable discussion and I was pleased to learn more about the many useful programs and services that are in place to help our veterans succeed economically and academically," said Addabbo, who serves as the ranking Democratic member of the Senate Veterans Committee. "We have taken steps to help service-disabled veteran businesses compete for state contracts, provide incentives for New York businesses to hire vets, and to help both service members and employers better understand how skills gained in the military can translate into civilian jobs. We have programs in place at CUNY to help veterans succeed in earning new degrees, and I am proposing legislation myself that would enable SUNY and CUNY to grant credit to veterans for comparable courses taken and skills acquired during their time in the armed forces."

Addabbo said an ongoing challenge is to help make veterans aware of the many initiatives that are in place to help them gain access to jobs, higher education and other resources.

"In 2014, I attended the Governor's first New York State Veterans and Military Families Summit focusing on concerns about employment, education, housing, health care and a number of other vital issues," he said. "We are making progress in reaching out to our veterans, but we need to do more to connect them with the unique employment and other services they need."

Addabbo also listed efforts to address paid leave for combat veterans with health issues, transportation barriers to jobs, and employment protections during military activation as areas to be explored for future action.

“Going forward, our plan of attack is simply to do our very best to give back to the men and women who all too often have chosen to put themselves in harm’s way on behalf of our country,” Addabbo said. “I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Senate Veterans Committee and all other stakeholders to ensure our veterans are offered every possible opportunity to achieve all of their goals on the work front and on the home front.”

The Senate Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs and Homeland Security is planning to issue a report on the roundtable, with follow up legislation, and will schedule additional roundtable discussions on other issues of concern to New York’s veterans and their families.