



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

## Senate Passes Bill Co-Sponsored by Addabbo to Provide Veterans with Opportunity to Purchase Retirement Credit

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR. May 17, 2016

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Howard Beach, NY (May 17, 2016) Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. recently joined with his Senate colleagues in once again approving legislation (S.7160) he co-sponsors to provide all active state public employee veterans with the opportunity to purchase up to three years of pension credit prior to retirement, a benefit that is now only available to former members of the armed forces who served during certain specified conflicts.

“This legislation, which would provide pension buy back equity for public employee veterans who served their country at times not now specified in state law, has been vetoed by the Governor twice in recent years for fiscal reasons,” said Addabbo, who serves as the ranking member on the Senate Committee on Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs.

“While we had hoped and expected to see this program included this year as part of the 2016-17 State Budget enacted on April 1, it didn’t happen. Now, we go forward with the expectation that the Governor’s pledge to negotiate a final veteran pension credit bill will be realized by the end of the 2016 legislative session in mid-June.”

Addabbo, who has co-sponsored the legislation for several years, added, “All of our public employee veterans, regardless of where or when they wore the uniform, deserve our gratitude and the opportunity to purchase the pension credit they lost while serving all of us

in the armed forces.”

The proposal, which was overwhelmingly approved by the Senate and Assembly over the last two years but vetoed by Governor Cuomo, would enable public employee veterans who served in peacetime – as well as a number of conflicts in Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Korean DMZ – to buy the pension credits for their military service. Eligible veterans, who must have been honorably discharged, would need at least five years of credited public service before applying for the credits. The bill provides \$24.8 million to pay for the service credits and is now under consideration by the Assembly Ways and Means Committee.

Currently, the New York State Military Service Credit Law applies to veterans who served in World War II, the Vietnam War and the Korean War, as well as to servicemen and women who earned certain expeditionary medals during conflicts in Lebanon, Grenada and Panama. Other eligible veterans include those who served in the Theater of operations including Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman, Persian Gulf, Red Sea and the airspace above these locations beginning in August 1990.

“I am disappointed that this assistance for our veterans was not included in the Governor’s budget and that he vetoed the previous bills,” said Addabbo. “I am hopeful 2016 will finally be the year when the Governor and Legislature join together to approve this measure and provide pension equity for all former members of the armed forces employed in the public sector, regardless of time of military service. Doing so will show appreciation for all of our public-employee veterans and allow them to buy back some of their military service as they approach retirement. It was the right thing to do in 2014 and 2015, and it’s the right thing to do in 2016.”