



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

## O'Mara: New state law will establish a free state App for veterans and families to access services

THOMAS F. O'MARA October 4, 2016

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State agencies need to continue to expand and modernize free, convenient access to information on programs and services. Steps like this make it more and more convenient for the public, in this case veterans and their families, to access information about programs and services that are available and that could provide valuable benefits.

**Elmira, N.Y., October 4**—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) today said that legislation unanimously approved by both houses of the Legislature this year to require the New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs to develop a free mobile app was signed into law today by

Governor Andrew Cuomo.

“We need to continue to take steps like this to make it more and more convenient for the public, in this case veterans and their families, to conveniently access information about programs and services that are available and that could provide valuable benefits,” said O’Mara. “This new law is yet another small step that New York State can take to recognize and honor the service and sacrifices of our veterans by ensuring that they and their families are aware of and can easily access information about the benefits, programs and services they have earned and deserve.”

The new law (**S7894/A10258, Chapter 358 of the Laws of 2016**) will make it easier for veterans and their family members to access information about vital programs and services available from the state and federal governments by requiring the New York State Division of Veterans’ Affairs to develop, operate, and maintain a mobile application to provide information about services provided by the Division, other state agencies, the federal government, and other organizations. Services to be listed on the mobile application include educational and job benefits, tuition assistance programs, survivor benefits, information about real property tax exemptions, as well as health and mental health referrals.

O’Mara said that other state agencies are beginning to offer free mobile apps, including the recently announced free “New York Hunting, Fishing & Wildlife App” (find out more about this app and download it here: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/96470.html>).

Throughout his Senate service, O’Mara has sponsored and strongly supported numerous veterans-related initiatives. The 2016-17 state budget includes a two-year extension of the state’s **Hire-A-Vet tax credit** to encourage businesses throughout New York to hire returning veterans. O’Mara strongly supported and co-sponsored the establishment of the Hire-A-Vet credit in 2013. In 2014, O’Mara co-sponsored legislation which ultimately led to the creation of

a **“NY Jobs For Heroes Program”** and established a state contract set-aside program for small businesses in New York owned by service-connected disabled veterans. New York's program mirrors a successful federal contract set-aside program for service-connected disabled vets. Similar set-aside programs have been created in nearly 40 other states.

In last year's state budget, O'Mara and several of his Senate colleagues secured funding for what's known as the NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming) Research & Recognition Project – an innovative, cutting-edge treatment that has shown exciting and successful advances in the **treatment of PTSD among veterans in New York State** over the past several years at Fort Drum and other state facilities where it's being used, particularly in the mid-Hudson Valley.

Of the PTSD initiative, O'Mara said, “It's a debilitating illness severely impacting the lives of thousands of our brave men and women returning from the battlefield. I think we have a duty and a responsibility to do whatever is possible to provide our military men and women with treatments that can help them overcome the harrowing effects of PTSD and regain a healthy and productive life. The Research and Recognition Project has demonstrated effective advancements in this field. I'm a believer in this program. Through this additional financial support, it could truly begin turning around the lives of more and more of our veterans and, by extension, the lives of their families and loved ones in New York State and nationally.”