



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael H. Ranzenhofer

Legislative Efforts Thank Veterans For Serving Our Country

SENATOR MICHAEL H. RANZENHOFER November 16, 2016

| ISSUE: **VETERANS**

Look for...

Senator Mike Ranzenhofer's
Monthly Column

...In your local newspaper
the third week of every month

Senator Ranzenhofer's column appeared in the Amherst and Clarence Bees on November 16th. As a nation, it is important for us to express our gratitude and appreciation on Veterans Day to our service men and women. We must always remember that our freedoms have been fought for and defended by current and former members of the United States Armed Forces, many of whom made the ultimate sacrifice.

I have always worked to support New York's courageous veterans, and I am proud to share a legislative update on my recent efforts.

A new law, effective at the start of this year, will help to reduce the local tax burden for veterans by authorizing an increase in limits to the real property tax exemption. The new law will provide additional savings and help veterans afford owning a home.

I supported major funding, as part of this year's State Budget, for veterans initiatives, including:

- \$2.8 million for the Joseph P. Dwyer Veteran Peer-to-Peer Program;
- \$450,000 for the Veterans Mental Health Training Initiative;
- \$500,000 for the NYS Defenders Association Veteran's Defense Program; and
- \$40,000 for the Vietnam Veterans of America New York State Council.

In May, two twin brothers from LeRoy, Thomas R. Wood Sr. and William Charles Wood III, joined me at a special State Capitol ceremony to be inducted into the State Senate Veterans' Hall of Fame.

The Wood brothers entered the United States Marine Corps. in 1988, attending boot camp together at Parris Island, South Carolina. Two years later, they would be called upon to serve their country in the First Gulf War. Today, they continue to serve our community as firefighters and active coaches in youth sports.

Lastly, after passing the State Legislature three times and being vetoed twice, I am pleased to finally report that the Veterans Buyback Bill has been signed into law. This new law allows all honorably discharged service members, with five years of existing public pension credits, to purchase three years of credit for their military service.

Previously, state law only allowed certain war veterans to purchase pension credits.

Expanding the law will help to encourage more veterans to return to New York and continue their public service.

As a co-sponsor of the bill, I worked hard to enact it into law. It is long overdue, and I am elated that all of our veterans will finally receive the benefits that they have earned.

Supporting these initiatives is the least we can do for our veterans. These heroic individuals have sacrificed so much to serve our nation, and we owe them a debt of gratitude that can never truly be repaid.

Please accept my profound thanks to all our service men and women, as well as their families. I am humbled to serve as your voice in state government.