



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

Senator Martins & Assemblywoman Schimel Author New Law Delivering Additional Resources to Help Veterans

JACK M. MARTINS December 8, 2016

| ISSUE: **VETERANS**

Senator Jack M. Martins (R-7th Senate District) and Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel (D-16th Assembly District) announced that legislation they sponsored to help deliver additional funding to veterans and servicemembers in need was recently signed into law by Governor Andrew Cuomo. The new law (Chapter 478 of 2016) creates a state sales tax exemption for veterans organizations selling poppy flowers to benefit disabled veterans and those currently serving the American armed forces.

“For almost a century, poppies have been sold to benefit men and women who sacrificed for our country and now need a helping hand. Creating this sales tax exemption will deliver additional resources to aid heroes in need. This is another positive step forward in fulfilling our societal obligation to do everything we can to help those who sacrificed in defense of our country,” said Senator Martins.

“I applaud Governor Cuomo for signing this bill into law. This sales tax exemption is a meaningful way for New York State to give back to its veterans and show our appreciation for their service. Many of us see these symbolic poppy flowers every year to remind us of the sacrifices our veterans and servicemembers have made for our country, and now people can purchase poppies knowing that all of the proceeds will benefit the veterans— as they

should," said Assemblywoman Schimel.

Veterans service organizations have been distributing poppies in exchange for donations to benefit disabled and hospitalized veterans for over 90 years. Each poppy is hand-made by a disabled or needy veteran who is paid a wage for their work. That tradition continues to this day, with the program having expanded to also help active duty military personnel and their families.

However, all sales of these poppies are subject to state sales tax. The law authored by Senator Martins and Assemblywoman Schimel exempts veterans organizations from having to pay sales tax for selling poppies, up to \$2,500 a year, ensuring that more of these funds are used for their intended purpose.

The poppy flower has long been a symbol used for honoring American soldiers who died bravely fighting for their country. The commonplace practice of wearing poppies on Veteran's Day originates from John McCrea's 1915 poem "In Flanders Fields." The poppy is a constant reminder that through the devastation of war, peace will eventually return, such as the poppy flowers grew on the war ravaged fields of World War I.

The new law takes effect March 1, 2017.