



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Kenneth P. LaValle

Senator LaValle: Senate Approves Bills To Protect, Assist, And Honor Current And Former Military Service Members

KENNETH P. LAVALLE May 24, 2017

| ISSUE: **MILITARY, VETERANS**



May 24, 2017 – Senator Ken LaValle announced that the Senate approved a package of bills focused on caring for and memorializing the courageous men and women who have served in our military, as well as those still serving today. The legislative package would safeguard the welfare of those who protect our lives, ease their fiscal burdens, show them the path to crucial benefits, and honor their service to this country.

Senator Ken LaValle said, “Throughout my career, I have fought for legislation that recognizes rewards and assists our veterans. This package of legislation would provide both our active military and our veterans with many basic opportunities that they deserve. Every service member sacrifices tremendously on a daily basis for his or her willingness to serve and protect all of us. It’s my hope that the Assembly follows suit and approves the bills, and that the Governor signs them into law.”

Protecting our Service Members:

· **Increasing Penalties for Violence against Active Duty and Reserve Military Members:** Bill [S927](#) would establish a class D felony for the crime of inciting violence against both active duty and reserve military service members in an effort to curb the destructive trend of targeting those who have made a career out of protecting the citizens of this country. Bill [S955](#) would make it a class C felony to commit assault against an active-duty soldier if the accused’s intent was to prevent that soldier from performing their lawful duty.

Making it More Affordable to Live in New York:

· **Establishing a Task Force on Veteran Employment Opportunities:** Bill [S936](#), would create a task force to study and improve the job market for veterans. The task force, would be comprised of stakeholders within state government, the private sector, and institutions of higher education. The Task Force would be required to hold annual public hearings and make recommendations to the legislature regarding ways the state can assist those who served our country in finding and maintaining meaningful employment opportunities.

· **Helping Veterans Afford a Home:** Bill [S5158](#) would assist service-related disabled veterans in

affording a home by giving those with a VA disability rating of 40 percent or higher a preference in applications to the state's Affordable Home Ownership Development Program.

· **Assisting More Veterans in Applying for Public Housing:** Bill [S1482](#) would expand eligibility for veterans in public housing to include those of recent conflicts, and require granting of a preference for public housing to veterans or families of veterans who have a military service connected disability.

· **Providing Tax Relief to Reservists Called to Active Duty:** Bill [S959](#) would allow municipalities to offer the alternative veterans' property tax exemption to members of the military who are currently serving on active duty. Under current law, individuals who are in active military service need to wait until their service in uniform is finished in order to receive the tax benefits extended by participating municipalities.

· **Providing Tax Relief to Reservists Called to Active Duty:** Bill [S2520A](#) would allow the governing body of a city, village, town, or county to exempt reservists called to active duty from property taxes. The exemption, which would span the time of active duty, would ease the financial burden that reservists and their families often face when they are called upon to serve.

· **Extending Property Tax Exemptions to Certain Reservist Veterans:** Bill [S5411](#) would permit towns to offer reserve military veterans who participated in Operation Graphic Hand the alternative veteran property tax exemption.

Connecting Service Members and Veterans with Important Services for them and their Families:

· **Ensuring Continuity of Care for Service Members' Families:** Bill [S5807](#) would ensure that service members who have dependent family members with developmental disabilities continue to receive services from the state without interruption to guarantee better continuity of care and better outcomes for the individual.

· **Giving All Active Duty Members of the Military Greater Access to State Parks:** Bill [S3571](#) would streamline the process for active duty service members to receive their free Empire Passport for state park usage. Current law requires the Empire Passport to be completed annually and to be sent via US Mail, making the entire process lengthy and cumbersome. Active duty service members and their immediate family would instead be eligible for the free pass by providing their military ID upon entry.

· **Simplifying the Process for Military Personnel to be Married:** Bill [S1013](#) would remove the 24 hour waiting period for marriage licenses for military personnel scheduled for deployment in less than 30 days. Currently the mandatory waiting period of 24 hours for couples to get married is a hindrance to those expected to serve our country overseas and on short notice.

· **Expand Opportunities and Services Available to Service-Disabled Veterans:** Bill [S2424B](#) would direct the State Division of Veterans' Affairs to develop a plan for a comprehensive statewide program of coordinated services for service-disabled veterans. The plan would include: educational training and retraining services and facilities; health, medical, and rehabilitation services; employment and re-employment services; housing options; transportation options; long-term care options; personal care; day program service options; family outreach; and other essential services that maximize existing resources.

· **Increasing Availability to Financial Relief for Blind Veterans:** Bill [S200](#) would provide an increase in the base rates of annuities payable to blind veterans and surviving spouses of blind veterans from \$1,000 to \$1,500. It also clarifies the formula for annual increases to take into account the latest federal increase for veterans' annuities;

· **Commemorating the Service of Veterans with Personalized License Plates:** Bill [S4464](#) would authorize the issuance of distinctive license plates for veterans, while also exempting them from the one-time service and annual registration fees to keep their license plates updated.

All of the bills have been transmitted to the Assembly for consideration. If approved, they would be sent to the Governor for approval.

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