



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew J. Lanza

SENATE PASSES PACKAGE OF MEMORIAL DAY BILLS HONORING VETERANS, THEIR FAMILIES, AND OUR COUNTRY

ANDREW J. LANZA May 24, 2017

| ISSUE: **VETERANS**



Today the New York State Senate passed a package of bills, in recognition of Memorial Day, that will honor the state's veterans and those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. The bills would reduce property taxes for disabled veterans, help Gold Star Parents, establish the crime of stolen valor, and support the American flag, among other measures.

The bills include:

Exempting 100-Percent-Disabled Veterans from Property Taxes: Bill S2599, sponsored by Senator Andrew Lanza (R - Staten Island), allows municipalities to offer a 100 percent exemption from property taxes for 100-percent-disabled veterans (or the unmarried surviving spouse of such veteran). The veterans must have served in a combat theatre or combat zone of operations, as documented by the awarding of a United States campaign ribbon or service medal, armed forces expeditionary medal, navy expeditionary medal, marine corps expeditionary medal, or global war on terrorism expeditionary medal.

Senator Lanza said, “This tax exemption is an appropriate and meaningful way to support those who have served our country and made sacrifices to protect our freedom and way of life. Providing a worthwhile means to help disabled veterans maintain home ownership allows us to honor their sacrifices and show our gratitude for their service. Our veterans deserve no less.”

Designating a POW/MIA Chair and Plaque in the State Capitol Building: Bill S5540, sponsored by Senator Lanza, directs the Commissioner of The Office of General Services to find a location in the state Capitol building for a POW/MIA chair and plaque that will honor United States prisoners of war and those still missing in action.

“Since World War I, more than 91,000 service members remain unaccounted for,” said Senator Lanza. “I believe that placing a POW/MIA chair and plaque in the State Capitol will serve as a reminder of the sacrifices made by our service men and women and honor those veterans who were unable to return home.”

Increasing Gold Star Parent Annuities: Bill S1124A, sponsored by Senator Kathy Marchione (R-C-I, Reform, Halfmoon), would provide an annual increase in compensation for the Gold Star Parent Annuity. The compensation for Gold Star Parents, those who have lost a son or daughter in military service, has not changed since its implementation in 2008 while

inflation and other economic factors have risen.

Senator Marchione, Member of the Senate Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs Committee, said, “Gold Star Parents have a special place in our state, our nation, and forever in our hearts. We owe Gold Star Parents a debt that can never be repaid. Wherever we can, whatever we can do to help them, we should. Increasing compensation for New York's Gold Star Parent Annuity is an important way we can do even more to help our Gold Star Parents.”

Designating the New Tappan Zee Bridge as “The Purple Heart Memorial Bridge”: Bill S4127, sponsored by Senator Bill Larkin (R-C, Cornwall-on-Hudson), would rename the new Tappan Zee Bridge in honor of Purple Heart recipients. The bridge is ideally suited to be named "The Purple Heart Memorial Bridge." It is located in the lower Hudson Valley where there are dozens of military sites and museums. Even more pertinent, the lower Hudson Valley is home to the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor (New Windsor) and the United States Military Academy at West Point (Highland Falls).

Senator Larkin said, “There are an estimated 1.8 million Purple Heart recipients across our great nation. It is imperative that we never lose sight of the sacrifice they and their families have made for our state and our country. New York State is rich with military history. It is the home of West Point, it is the home of the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor, and now we are one step closer to it being the home of the Purple Heart Memorial Bridge.”

Providing Gold Star Mothers with a Commemorative License Plate: Bill S2538A, sponsored by Senator Joseph Griffo (R-C-I, Rome), allows the Department of Motor Vehicles to issue a special license plate to Gold Star Mothers who surrender their set of distinctive plates for their car. The DMV would issue one keepsake license plate, at no cost, to the Gold Star Mother. The plates will be a different size than those currently used for motor vehicles to

ensure it is used for commemorative purposes only.

Senator Griffo said, “As we prepare to remember our veterans and those brave men and women who gave their lives in the name of freedom this Memorial Day, I am proud to join the Senate in passing this series of measures that would honor those who have served our country. The lasting courage of our troops has defined the American values of our nation ever since its founding, and it is appropriate to do whatever we can to always recognize the sacrifice these individuals and their families have endured on our behalf. Whether it’s helping our disabled veterans, supporting the Gold Star Mothers or protecting the American flag, these measures passed in the State Senate are a symbol of our endless gratitude for our courageous defenders of democracy.”

Requiring American Flags Bought by the State to be Made in the United States: Bill S4007, sponsored by Senator Rich Funke (R-C-I, Fairport), enacts the American Made Flag Act of 2017 which requires that American flags purchased for use by the state government be made in the United States. It is currently estimated that the state spends nearly \$3.6 million every year on United States flags produced in other countries.

Senator Funke said, “As we honor those we’ve lost in service to our nation this Memorial Day weekend, our flag will fly high all across New York as a symbol of America’s enduring greatness. There’s no better time than now to take action to ensure that all American flags purchased by our state government are made in America and support American jobs.”

Providing Tenant Protections for the Right to Display the United States flag: Bill S4539, sponsored by Senator Pam Helming (R-C-I, Canandaigua), prohibits a landlord from banning a tenant from displaying the United States flag, similar to the protections available to home and condominium owners. Displaying the flag is a sign of patriotism and support of the country, but also a right.

Senator Helming said, “As a senator and member of a military family, I was proud to cast my vote today in support of this package of legislation honoring our nation's veterans on Memorial Day, including a measure I sponsor that would allow tenants of rental units to fly the American flag. This is but a small token of our gratitude and appreciation for veterans and families who have answered the call to serve their country, many of whom have made the ultimate sacrifice. As we begin taking part in commemorations and parades, let us be reminded of the true reasons we celebrate this Memorial Day.”

Establishing the Crime of Stolen Valor: Bill S957A, sponsored by Senator Thomas Croci (R, Sayville), establishes the new crime of stolen valor--impersonating a service member for the purpose of obtaining money or other benefits--and makes it a class E felony. Those convicted of stolen valor must also pay a \$250 fee that goes to the Veterans Remembrance and Cemetery Maintenance and Operation Fund.

Allowing the Votes of Deceased Military Personnel to be Counted: Bill S944, also sponsored by Senator Croci, allows the ballot of an active duty service member who has died in combat to be counted towards the election for which it was cast. Current law prohibits the counting of an absentee ballot cast by any individual who died prior to the date of the election, but this bill gives our brave service members one final act of citizenship.

Senator Croci said, “For the sacrifices that our military make for our benefit, answering our nations call to service, the least we can do is offer our undue respect for them when they pay the ultimate sacrifice. We need to make sure that those who choose to tarnish the valor of these heroes through impersonation for personal gain or to manipulate an election should be punished to the fullest extent. We need to ensure that we have laws in place that returns their good names and great deeds to them and their families.”

The bills will be sent to the Assembly.

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