



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew J. Lanza

Senator Lanza Joins Lt.Governor Hochul to Announce Dedication of New State Capitol POW/MIA Chair to Honor Prisoners of War and Servicemembers Missing in Action

ANDREW J. LANZA March 30, 2018

| ISSUE: **HONORING VETERANS**



“Today, as our State and nation commemorate Vietnam Veterans Day, it is only appropriate that this chair and plaque forever remind our citizens and tourists who visit the Capitol of our military personnel who are missing or were prisoners in our nation’s military conflicts. This display is a noble gesture for a united nation to honor and support our soldiers who have not returned home. I want to thank Governor Cuomo for signing this law which allows us to honor these brave American heroes and also thank Assemblymember Michael DenDekker for his leadership as Chairman of the Veterans’ Affairs Committee. I would also like to recognize the hard work of Rolling Thunder Chapter 2 - Staten Island,

which has been on the forefront of this important POW/MIA memorial.” said Senator Lanza.

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced the dedication of a Prisoners of War and Missing in Action chair in the New York State Capitol. As per tradition, the chair, which will be located in the State Street lobby of the New York State Capitol, will remain perpetually empty in order to honor those brave men and women who have not yet returned home or who have suffered unimaginable atrocities, ensuring that they are always kept in New Yorkers' thoughts.

"We must never forget or abandon those who have risked their lives and made the ultimate sacrifice to protect our nation and the principles we hold dear," Governor Cuomo said. "With the dedication of this POW/MIA Chair, we honor those heroes who have yet to return home and fulfill the promise that they are forever in the hearts and minds of New Yorkers."

"Throughout our country's history, families of service members who are missing in action or prisoners of war are the ones who have never forgotten their loved ones," said Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul. "But each of us who has slept more securely because of their willingness to fight for our nation also must never forget. This chair dedicated today is a visual reminder of that moral responsibility here in our State's Capitol."

POW/MIA Chairs of Honor can be found in public spaces ranging from professional sports stadiums to government buildings. The chair on display at the Capitol was selected from the Ogdensburg New York National Guard Armory. Soldiers from the Ogdensburg Armory, constructed in 1898, have served in almost every American war, including the Spanish American War, World War I, World War II, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Responding to the call of duty, New York Servicemembers have repeatedly risked their own lives to protect our country and uphold the founding values of freedom and democracy.

Since World War I, 6,995 New York Servicemembers are still currently unaccounted for. Nationwide, 142,000 Americans have been captured and interned as POWs. This dedication serves as just one way to remember the brave Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines who have been held captive or never returned home from war.

Senator Andrew Lanza said, "Today, as our State and nation commemorate Vietnam Veterans Day, it is only appropriate that this chair and plaque forever remind our citizens and tourists who visit the Capitol of our military personnel who are missing or were prisoners in our nation's military conflicts. This display is a noble gesture for a united nation to honor and support our soldiers who have not returned home. I want to thank Governor Cuomo for signing this law which allows us to honor these brave American heroes and also thank Assemblymember Michael DenDekker for his leadership as Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee."

Assemblyman Michael DenDekker, Chair, NYS Assembly Committee on Veterans Affairs said, "I would like to thank Governor Cuomo and Commissioner Destito for having this ceremony and making space to honor prisoners of war and those still missing in action. Thousands of service members have gone unaccounted for and the POW/MIA Chair of Honor reminds us not only of the efforts and sacrifices that those service members made, but to highlight our dedication to work harder every day to bring each and every one of them home."

Executive Deputy Director of the New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs Joel Evans said, "My gratitude goes out to the Servicemembers who have been taken captive and those who remain unaccounted for. You have not been forgotten and New York will continue to work tirelessly to ensure that you are returned home. To those families who are still waiting, please know we are here for you and you have our deepest sympathies."

Office of General Services Commissioner RoAnn Destito said, "Governor Cuomo has been a strong advocate for Servicemembers both in policy and making sure that their history is honored and recognized here at the New York State Capitol. As the stewards of the Capitol, OGS is pleased to include this chair in our collection as a visible reminder of those who or been taken captive or have not yet returned home, so that they are never forgotten."

Grant T. Coates, Co-Chair POW-MIA Committee Veterans Initiative Program, Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. said, "The mission of Vietnam Veterans of America Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Committee is to "seek and promote the fullest accounting of those still listed as POW/MIA's in Southeast Asia and any other areas of the world, regardless of the conflict that initiated their disappearance. Public education and awareness are essential for keeping the history and memory of the citizen/soldier sacrifice for this nation at the forefront of everyday memories. Placing an empty chair, reserved for those that never returned from war, will be a solemn daily reminder to the observer."

The New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs

Under Governor Cuomo's administration, the New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs has filed over 27,000 claims for New York's Veterans and their families leading to the awarding of more than \$254 million in tax-free federal Veterans' benefits.

Veterans who were injured on active duty may file a claim at any time for disability compensation. Certain disabilities are presumptively linked to a Veteran's prior status as a Prisoner of War. For information and free assistance regarding benefits and services for Veterans, Servicemembers and their families, please visit www.veterans.ny.gov and call 888-838-7697 to schedule an appointment with a Veterans Benefits Advisor.

Honoring New York State's Military History

Visitors to the Capitol may also be interested in touring the Vietnam Memorial Gallery and the memorials honoring those who served our country that are located throughout the Empire State Plaza Complex. Information on the Gallery can be found at <https://vietnamgallery.ogs.ny.gov/> and memorials at <https://ogs.ny.gov/ESP/ct/memorials/>.