



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew J. Lanza

## Senator Andrew Lanza and Assemblyman Matthew Titone Honored Vietnam Veterans at New York State's 10th Annual Celebration of Vietnam Veterans Day, at Tottenville High School

ANDREW J. LANZA April 17, 2018

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*“Thank you and welcome home! It is a great honor to stand here today with these heroes as we pay tribute to their service. These veterans courageously risked their lives in support of our freedom. It was 10 years ago that we first joined together to mark New York’s formal recognition of Vietnam Veterans’ Day. It was of great privilege to have written the law that finally recognized the sacrifices our troops made in the Vietnam War. We remain thankful to Lester Modelowitz, Gene DiGiacomo, and all the members of VVA Chapter 421 for always advocating for our veterans.” Senator Lanza*

*TODAY, SENATOR ANDREW LANZA AND ASSEMBLYMAN MATTHEW TITONE HONORED VIETNAM VETERANS AT NEW YORK STATE'S 10TH ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF VIETNAM VETERANS DAY, AT TOTTEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL*

Vietnam Veterans' Day is a day of appreciation, remembrance and tribute to those who heroically served and fought for the United States during the Vietnam War.

Ten years ago, Vietnam Veteran Lester Modelowitz and Vietnam Veterans' of America (VVA) Chapter 421 sought to secure a date that would be recognized formally as Vietnam Veterans' Day in New York State. They worked closely with Senator Lanza and Assemblyman Titone, who authored the legislation (S6472-2008), to forever designate March 29th as Vietnam Veterans' Day in New York State. This legislation ultimately secured the unanimous support of the State Legislature.

Forty five years ago, on March 29, 1973, the last 2,500 troops were withdrawn from South Vietnam, thus ending military involvement. Due to the country's perception of this war, soldiers were not properly treated upon their return home despite their sacrifice and courage. 58,195 brave souls fought and died serving our country. Of the names listed on the Vietnam Memorial Wall, 4,120 were from the State of New York and 84 were Staten Island natives.

Senator Lanza and Assemblyman Titone held the first Vietnam Veterans' Day ceremony on Sunday March 29, 2009 to properly thank and welcome home those who risked their lives in defense of our nation and to honor those who died to protect the rights and freedoms of Americans. Every year since, Senator Lanza, Assemblyman Titone, elected officials, veterans, and guests gather to acknowledge the bravery, determination, and strength of those who served in Vietnam and for those who never returned. In 2008, New York was one of just a small number of states to recognize Vietnam Veterans' Day. As of 2017, Vietnam Veterans'

Day is now a nationally recognized day of recognition.

Senator Andrew Lanza said: "Thank you and welcome home! It is a great honor to stand here today with these heroes as we pay tribute to their service. These veterans courageously risked their lives in support of our freedom. It was 10 years ago that we first joined together to mark New York's formal recognition of Vietnam Veterans' Day. It was of great privilege to have written the law that finally recognized the sacrifices our troops made in the Vietnam War. We remain thankful to Lester Modelowitz, Gene DiGiacomo, and all the members of VVA Chapter 421 for always advocating for our veterans."

Assemblyman Matthew Titone stated: "Creating Vietnam Veterans' Day in the State of New York with Senator Lanza, has been both a professional and personal highlight of my career. I am privileged to have the opportunities to work with our veterans who have consistently demonstrated honor and service throughout their post war lives. I am forever grateful not only for their service but also for truly transforming my life and perspective of sacrifice and love of country and community."

Gene DiGiacomo, President, VVA Chapter 421 said: "On this day that has been put aside for us, and we gather together as brothers and sisters. We realize that many years have passed and many of our brothers and sisters are no longer with us, but we cannot let that soften our resolve. Let us remember the promise we made. A promise not only to ourselves but also to those who never came home. To our brothers and sisters that laid down their lives so that others in a far away land can live as we do. A promise that we will never let their sacrifice be forgotten or fade away with time. A special thanks to Senator Andrew Lanza and Assemblyman Matthew Titone for giving us this day and celebrating the 10th anniversary. Remember our motto 'Never Again Will One Generation of Veterans Abandon Another.' You are all in my thoughts and prayers."

Lester Modelowitz, Vietnam Veteran voiced: “In September 2007, I had written a letter to Senator Andrew Lanza with a request to have March 29th known as Vietnam Veterans’ Day in the State of New York. March 29th was the last day that combat troops were in Vietnam. In May of 2008 the bill was signed by the Governor of New York.”

Principal Joseph Scarmato of Tottenville High School expressed: “We are grateful for the sacrifices our veterans have made and it is an honor to host the yearly Vietnam Veterans’ commemoration ceremony at Tottenville High School. It allows us to not only recognize their valor but it allows our younger generation to remember and learn about patriotism.”

More than 250 people gathered for today’s special ceremony at Tottenville High School. Those present included, Senator Andrew Lanza, Assemblyman Matthew Titone, Congressman Daniel Donovan, District Attorney Michael McMahon, Assemblyman Michael Cusick, and Civil Court Judge Lisa Grey. Attendees were greeted by a special photo display that offered highlights of the past 10 years of commemorations. A “Then and Now” video presentation offered a view of our veterans during the Vietnam War along with them in the present day.

Special recognition was also given for a POW/MIA Chair that was dedicated in the New York State Capitol in March 29th of this year. Senator Lanza was the author of legislation to establish the POW/MIA Chair, which now sits at the entrance to the State Capitol building. He worked with Rolling Thunder Chapter 2 (Staten Island) to develop this legislation.

Photos from the event can be viewed at <https://photos.app.goo.gl/Vm8zao2gBVHLYdSl1>