



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

## Senator Brad Hoylman And Assembly Member Didi Barrett’s “Restoration Of Honor Act” Signed Into Law, Finally Restoring Equal Rights To LGBTQ Veterans Discharged On The Basis Of Their Sexual Orientation Or Gender Identity

BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL November 12, 2019

| ISSUE: **SD 27, LGBTQ RIGHTS, VETERANS DAY**

*Many LGBTQ Veterans Were Less Than Honorably Discharged From The U.S. Armed Forces Due To Their Sexual Orientation Or Gender Identity*

*New Law Will Also Restore Equal Rights To Veterans Discharged As A Result Of Military Sexual Trauma, Traumatic Brain Injuries Or PTSD*

NEW YORK—This week, after New Yorkers commemorated Veterans’ Day, Senator Brad Hoylman and Assembly Member Didi Barrett’s Restoration of Honor Act ([S.45B/A.8097](#)) was signed into law by Governor Andrew Cuomo. This legislation would extend state veterans benefits to New Yorkers who were less than honorably discharged from the U.S. Armed Forces due to their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, military sexual trauma, traumatic brain injury or post-traumatic stress disorder. With the passage of this legislation, these veterans will now be able to access state benefits for which they were previously ineligible.

**Senator Hoylman said:** “According to a study my office conducted in 2015, there are more than 50 New York State benefits denied to LGBTQ veterans who were less than honorably

discharged on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Even as gay and lesbian Americans have been able to openly serve in the military for nearly a decade, generations of LGBTQ Americans are still unable to access many veterans' benefits due to the status of their military discharge. We are finally addressing this injustice by passing the Restoration of Honor Act, thanks to a new Senate majority led by Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins that stands resolutely in favor of LGBTQ rights. I'm grateful to my co-sponsor Assembly Member Didi Barrett for her work with me to pass this bill, to Assembly Member Buchwald for his years of advocacy for this legislation, to LGBT rights groups like SAGE which have been fighting for our community for decades, and to Governor Cuomo for signing it into law today."

**Assembly Member Barrett said:** "The men and women who have stepped up and risked their lives to protect and serve our country embody what it means to be a hero. Yet, for far too long, many of our veterans in the LGBTQ community, those who experienced military sexual trauma and vets struggling with mental and behavioral health disorders have been denied the support and resources they've earned when they separate from service. With this new law, and appropriately on Veterans Day, we are righting a terrible wrong and showing these veterans how grateful we are for their service and that we're here for them now that they are home. Thank you to Senator Hoylman for his leadership and partnership on this critical legislation."

**SAGE Executive Vice President Lynn Faria said:** "Coming on the heels of Veterans Day, what a way to honor New York's LGBT veterans. For too long, LGBT service members put their lives on the line only to suffer in silence under military policies that took a tremendous toll. Older LGBT veterans especially bore the burden of hiding and have suffered because of their lack of access to critical benefits. We know, through our statewide SAGEVets program, that accessing VA and other veteran services, is crucial to the well-being of these veterans."

Thanks to Governor Cuomo, and the work of Senator Brad Hoylman and Assemblymember Didi Barrett, older LGBT veterans will finally be able to secure the services they need and deserve.”

According to [a study released by Senator Hoylman in 2015](#), there are at least 53 state benefits for veterans that are directly contingent on their discharge status. New Yorkers who were discharged less than honorably solely on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, military sexual trauma, traumatic brain injuries (TBI) or post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have been unable to access these benefits to this point.

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### **2019-S45B**

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- Introduced
  
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
  
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
  
- - Passed Assembly

- Passed Senate

- Delivered to Governor

- Signed By Governor

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Relates to discharged LGBT veterans

December 21, 2018

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by **Brad Hoylman-Sigal**

Do you support this bill?