



MAIL CALL

CHAIRMAN STEVE STERN

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Issue 008

30 November 2025/Vol. 001

A Message From Our Chairman

It has been my privilege to work closely with and for the brave men and women who have sacrificed so much to protect our great nation. I look forward to meeting with our veterans from across New York State, and as Chairman I remain committed to ensuring that our veterans in New York State always receive the recognition, support, and services that they deserve.



Contact Chairman Stern

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id=40](https://nyassembly.gov/comm/?id=40)**



Chairman Steve Stern and the New York State Assembly Veterans' Affairs Committee in Huntington Town Hall for the Committee hearing on Veterans' Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

Important Information from Chairman Stern

NYS Department of Veterans' Services	518-474-6114
Veterans Crisis Hotline	988, Press 1
VA Health Benefits Hotline	877-222-VETS
PACT Act Assistance	800-698-2411
VA Healthcare-Related Fraud, VHA Office of Integrity and Compliance Helpline	1-866-842-4357
VA Benefits Fraud Helpline	1-800-827-1000
Support for VGLI Program, SGLI Program, and FSGLI Claims	800-419-1473
Support for VA-Life, S-DVI, and VMLI	800-669-8477
Assistance with Education Benefits	888-442-4551
Caregiver Support Line	1-855-260-3274
VA Loan Guaranty Service	877-827-3702
Special Issue Hotline – Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act, Gulf War, Agent Orange, and other information	800-749-8387
National Call Center for Homeless Veterans	877-424-3838
MISSION Act	800-698-2411
Spina Bifida Health Care Benefits Program	833-930-0816
Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs, CHAMPVA	800-733-8387
Women Veterans Helpline	855-829-6636
Debt Management Center	800-827-0648
National Pension Call Center	877-294-6380
Health Resource Center (collection of medical and prescription debts)	866-400-1238
Paralyzed Veterans of America	212-807-3114
Veteran Text Crisis Line:	text 838255
Connect with a fellow combat Veteran about your experiences, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:	1-877-927-8387; TTY:711

Important Information from Chairman Stern

VA Health Chat: This app allows veterans to chat with VA staff when they have a question about a non-life-threatening health issue, want to schedule a VA appointment or refill a VA prescription, and more: <https://mobile.va.gov/app/va-health-chat>

VA Health and Benefits: Download the VA Health and Benefits mobile app to manage VA health care, benefits and payments from a mobile phone or tablet: <https://mobile.va.gov/app/va-health-and-benefits>

VA Video Connect: An app to help Veterans and their caregivers quickly and easily meet with VA health care providers through live video on any computer or mobile device with an internet connection: <https://mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect>

Schedule an online consultation with a NYS Veterans Services Agency Benefits Advisor:
<https://veterans.ny.gov>

Find your local NYS Veterans Services Office: <https://veterans.ny.gov/office-locations>

Find your local NYS Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialists:
<https://dol.ny.gov/services-veterans>

Property Tax Exemptions for Veterans:
<https://veterans.ny.gov/property-tax-exemptions-veterans>

Health and Disability Benefits for Families and Caregivers:
<https://www.va.gov/family-and-caregiver-benefits/health-and-disability/>

Apply for a Veterans Status Designation on a NYS Photo ID:
<https://dmv.ny.gov/more-info/veteran-status-designation-on-a-photo-document>

Homes for Veterans Program: <https://veterans.ny.gov/homes-veterans-program>

Gold Star Annuity Program: <https://veterans.ny.gov/gold-star-parent-annuity-program>

New York State Blind Annuity Program: <https://veterans.ny.gov/new-york-state-blind-annuity-program>

Benefits for Certain Children of Vietnam War Veterans who served in areas where Agent Orange and other chemicals were used: <https://veterans.ny.gov/benefits-certain-children-vietnam-war-veterans>

New York State Veterans' Nursing Homes: <https://veterans.ny.gov/new-york-state-veterans-nursing-homes>

Joseph P. Dwyer Peer Support Project

Founded in memory of Private First Class Joseph P. Dwyer, a combat medic in Iraq who struggled with PTSD, their mission is to advocate for safe, non-clinical environments where veterans can connect, share their experiences, and find healing through the support of their peers. This peer-driven approach helps veterans and their families navigate the challenges of civilian life, from mental health struggles to reintegration into their communities.



New York State's Joseph P. Dwyer Veteran Peer Support Programs

Connection. Community. Support.

**Explore Support Programs for
Veterans, Families & Caregivers**

Visit: www.JosephPDwyerPeerProject.org

This is the official website for all Dwyer Programs in New York State.

✧ What You'll Find on the Site:

- ✓ An interactive map of every Dwyer Program by county
- ✓ Upcoming events, meetups, and Veteran activities
- ✓ Peer support info for Veterans, families, and caregivers
- ✓ Resources for mental health, benefits, and reintegration
- ✓ Contact details to reach local program coordinators

👤 Who Is It For?

- ✓ Veterans from all service branches
- ✓ Active Duty, National Guard & Reservists
- ✓ Family members and caregivers



Website *powered by*



Scan the QR code or visit:
www.JosephPDwyerPeerProject.org

Veterans' Affairs Committee Hearing

Examining Ways to Improve Access to Veterans' Mental Health Resources

While Committee hearings are typically held in Albany, Assemblyman Steve Stern brought his first hearing as Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee to Huntington Town Hall on Long Island, home of the largest Veteran population in New York State.

Assembly Member Stern, Chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and Assembly Member Jo Anne Simon, Chairwoman of the Committee on Mental Health, conducted a joint public hearing to examine ways to increase veterans' access to mental health services.



The Committees heard testimony from the leading experts, organizations, service providers, advocacy groups and leaders shaping New York State policy on Veterans' Affairs and Mental Health, including the NYS Office of Mental Health and Department of Veterans' Services, the New York State Dwyer Coalition, and the Suffolk County Veterans Services Agency.

The hearing explored ways to improve veterans' access to vital services, including the roles existing resources, such as suicide prevention funding, can play in addressing mental health challenges. Panelists shared successful programs expanding mental health resources to school-aged children of Military Families, improving outreach through telehealth, the crucial value of our peer-to-peer programs, and supporting mental health services for our veterans in long-term care facilities.





Veteran PTSD and Suicide Awareness

Worried About a Veteran - (WAV) is an online resource designed to help prevent suicide among veterans and service members. It was developed to be a family-focused resource to assist military families and caregivers with talking to a veteran or service member during a time of mental health distress.

<https://worriedaboutaveteran.org/>

Connect with your Suicide Prevention Coordinator

Each VA medical center has a Suicide Prevention Coordinator to connect you with the counseling and services needed. Visit the link below to find your local coordinator:

<https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/find-resources/local-resources/>

For more information, visit: <https://veterans.ny.gov/veteran-suicide-prevention>

Department of Veterans' Services Mobile Outreach Van



Mobile Outreach Vans provide a unique and secure space for Veterans, Service Members, and Military Families to meet in confidence with a Veterans Benefits Advisor accredited by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), bringing this crucial service to the places around New York State.

From a Mobile Outreach Van, a Veteran, Service Member, or Military Family member can work with a Veterans Benefits Advisor to file a claim or appeal for VA benefits, enroll in VA healthcare, receive guidance regarding the property tax exemption on their New York State residence, obtain their annual allotment of Fresh Connect Checks for redemption at farmers' markets, and complete any other task that they would be able to fulfill inside a brick-and-mortar New York State Department of Veterans' Services office.

For more information, visit: <https://veterans.ny.gov/veterans-outreach-events-and-veteran-mobile-unit>

The Mobile Outreach Van Application can be found here: https://veterans.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2025/10/van-attendance-form-1_0.pdf

At United Veterans Beacon House we are committed to providing personalized, supportive care for our veteran clients.

United Veterans Beacon House is a 501(c)(3) non-profit headquartered in Bay Shore, New York. Each year our dedicated staff helps more than 1,250 veterans, through our housing program and community-based supportive programs.

Programs and Services:

- Emergency & transitional housing assists single males & single females.
- Permanent housing serves single males and veterans with families.
- Permanent housing for persons living with HIV/AIDS through the HOPWA program.
- Assistance with service & non-service connected benefits
- Nutritional assistance
- Pro bono legal services
- Transportation
- Job readiness & search
- Rental & utility arrears assistance
- Thrift shop
- Holiday meals & gift assistance
- Referrals to health care services

To learn if you're eligible, please call UVBH HQ at **631.665.1571** or scan this QR code.



CONTACT US:

631.665.1571 ● info@uvbh.com ● www.uvbh.org
1715 Union Blvd., Bay Shore, NY 11706



Veterans Project

Food Collection Bin

Giving Back to Our Veterans

Returning soldiers and their families face unique challenges transitioning from the front lines to civilian life. Help veterans in Nassau and Suffolk Counties. All donations are greatly appreciated.

EXAMPLES OF OUR MOST NEEDED ITEMS

Listed below are examples of our most requested items, however we accept ALL nonperishable items. Together, we can help Long Islanders facing hunger.

BREAKFAST Cereals Oatmeal	BOXED/DAGGED GRAINS Pasta Rice (Brown/White)	CANNED FRUITS Low Sugar Items No Sugar Added
CANNED MEALS Soups Pasta Meals Stews	CANNED PROTEINS Chicken Fish/Tuna, Salmon, etc.) Beans	CANNED VEGETABLES Low Sodium Items No Salt Added
COOKING & PANTRY Condiments/Spices Olive Oil Sauces	DAIRY Shelf-Stable Milk Canned/Evaporated Dry Milk	TOILETRIES Toilet Paper Tissues Paper Towels
BABY SUPPLIES Formula Baby Food/Snacks Diapers	ENTERTAINMENT Peanut Butter Jelly/Jams Juices (100% Fruit)	IMPORTANT INFORMATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Let's promote healthy eating! Choose foods that are low in sugar/sodium and free of high fructose corn syrup. Only brown, cans or plastic. NO GLASS. <p>631.562.3663 www.licares.org</p>



In collaboration with Assemblyman Steve Stern, Chairman of the NYS Assembly Veterans' Affairs Committee and Half Hollow Hills Community Library.

IMAGINE
 HALF HOLLOW HILLS
 COMMUNITY LIBRARY

Veterans Peer Support Project

**Third Monday of Each Month
12 PM–2 PM**

Half Hollow Hills Community Library

55 Vanderbilt Parkway, Dix Hills, NY 11746

hhhllibrary.org | 631-421-4530

Stop by and speak with a peer mentor to learn about free programs and services for Long Island Veterans of all eras. Light refreshments will be available. No registration required. Open to all.



Joseph P. Dwyer Project

LEGAL SERVICES

**Legal Services
of Long Island**

Long Island
State Veterans Home
AT STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY

**Long Island State
Veterans Home**



**Suffolk County Veterans
Services Agency**



**Long Island Cares
Inc. The Harry
Chapin Food Bank**



**United Veterans
Beacon House**



Veterans' Affairs Committee Updates

In honor of Veterans Day, Governor Kathy Hochul signed into law bills to support our veterans and their families, **including Chairman Stern's legislation, A8476, the GUARD Act.**

"As the Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee of the New York State Assembly, I thank Governor Hochul for signing my bill to protect veterans from bad actors who attempt to take advantage of veterans by fraudulently seeking payment for services without proper accreditation from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs," Assemblyman Stern said.

A8476, STERN

This bill enacts the Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding (GUARD) VA benefits act to increase penalties on individuals and entities who act in violation of federal and state law related to preparing, presenting or prosecuting claims for veterans benefits including soliciting or receiving compensation in connection with a claim for VA benefits without being properly accredited by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Governor also signed Assembly Member Rajkumar's and Assembly Member McDonald's impactful legislative initiatives, expanding access to employment for veterans with service-connected disabilities, and designating New York a Purple Heart State.

A4751A, RAJKUMAR

Ensures that New York State and local veterans' service agencies include disabled veterans in employment assistance obligations.

A29, McDONALD

Designates New York State a Purple Heart state, honoring our combat veterans for their service and sacrifice.



During the May 19, 2025, Veterans’ Affairs Committee Meeting, the Committee passed 13 bills for a total of 23 bills voted out of committee year to date, making this the most productive session of the Committee in a **decade**.

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A6264, STERN

Establishes members of the commissioned corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the United States Public Health Services (USPHS) as veterans under NYS law consistent with federal law.

PASSED NYS ASSEMBLY, 4/2/2025; PASSED NYS SENATE 6/11/2025

A6579, STERN

Tax relief for the men and women who serve our nation – this legislation provides a property tax exemption for active service members whose military duty station is within the boundaries of New York State and has served in a combat zone anytime during the taxable year.

PASSED NYS SENATE 5/27/2025; PASSED NYS ASSEMBLY 5/29/2025

A2058, CUNNINGHAM

Requires the Women Veterans Coordinator of the Department of Veterans' Services to develop and implement a maternity care program for pregnant and postpartum veterans.

SIGNED INTO LAW 2/14/2025

A2435, CRUZ

Regarding the definition of "intended recipients" of the Alex R. Jimenez New York Military Immigrant Family Program to specifically include spouses, parents, and children of a uniformed service member, veteran, or reserve component member as well as the next-of-kin of such service members and veterans requesting a grant of posthumous U.S. citizenship on their behalf.

SIGNED INTO LAW 2/14/2025

A6538, SCHIAVONI

This bill provides that the previous Division of Veterans’ Services will now be known as the Department of Veterans’ Services, a Cabinet-level NYS agency, consistently throughout state law.

PASSED NYS ASSEMBLY 4/8/2025

A291A, BARRETT

This bill ensures that the nation's newest service branch members, the Space Force, are included in the definition of veterans and uniformed services under New York State law.

PASSED NYS ASSEMBLY 5/21/2025; PASSED NYS SENATE 6/12/2025

A4649A, RAJKUMAR

Provides that certificates of honorable separation from or service in the armed forces of the United States will be forwarded to the appropriate local veterans' service agency within 60 days of receipt.

PASSED NYS ASSEMBLY 5/5/2025; PASSED NYS ASSEMBLY 6/11/2025

A8087, STERN

This bill authorizes the presentation of a New York State Cold War Commemorative Medal for active duty during the period of September 2, 1945 through December 26, 1991

PASSED NYS ASSEMBLY 5/5/2025

A8089, DAIS

Establishes a New York State veterans' and service member law book of a compilation of all state statutes governing the rights, privileges, benefits and services afforded to veterans, service members and their families.

PASSED NYS ASSEMBLY 5/5/2025

A3397A, RAGA

This bill would facilitate additional entries on the New York State Veterans Memorial Registry.

A5155, STERN

This bill would create a veteran health care review to ensure veterans and their families have access to health and mental health treatment, including for post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, military sexual trauma, reproductive and mental health conditions, and suicide prevention.

PASSED NYS ASSEMBLY 5/29/2025; PASSED SENATE 6/10/2025

A6037A, HUNTER

This bill would establish a peer support program for veterans, and establishes minimum qualifications for recognized or certified veteran peer counselors.

A6559B, BENEDETTO

Establishes a veterans' bill of rights; provides sample language for such bill of rights; requires the Department of Veterans' Services to establish and distribute a veterans' bill of rights and to make such bill of rights available on the department's website.

PASSED NYS ASSEMBLY 5/21/2025

A7627A, KAY

Authorizes the Department of Veterans' Services to consult and collaborate with relevant offices in the federal Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Health, the State Office for the Aging and other HCBS experts to develop educational materials for veterans and their families about the accessibility to home and community-based services.

PASSED NYS ASSEMBLY 5/21/2025

A8425, STERN

This bill directs the Department of Veterans' Services to conduct a study about veterans' employment to help those who volunteer to serve in the military make a successful transition to civilian life and employment.

A8473, STERN

Enacts the "missing vulnerable veterans at risk program act" to establish a missing vulnerable veterans at risk program to provide a comprehensive and coordinated approach to the problem of missing vulnerable veterans at risk.

A8475, BERGER

This bill changes the references to the name of the Director of the Department of Veterans' Services to the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans' Services

PASSED NYS ASSEMBLY 6/6/2025, PASSED NYS SENATE 6/13/2025

A8477, HUNTER

Establishes a women veteran's peer to peer program.

A8483, O'PHARROW

The purpose of this bill is to ensure that any outside entities attempting to file a pension claim for veterans, or their family members, not receive any compensation prior to the claimant being provided notice of the agency of original jurisdiction.

A8484, STERN

Directs the commissioner of veterans' services to establish a registry of self-identifying service members, veterans and family members of such individuals who may have experienced exposure to a hazardous substance at a military installation and to establish and maintain a public information program in order to educate and inform service members, veterans, and their families.

A8485, STERN

Requires the Department of Veterans' Services to provide information on the department's website on volunteer opportunities available to veterans and to post relevant application forms that a qualified veteran can use to apply for volunteer opportunities.

PASSED NYS ASSEMBLY 6/9/2025, PASSED NYS SENATE 6/12/2025



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