



MAIL CALL

CHAIRMAN STEVE STERN COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Issue 003

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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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Chairman Stern hosted the Legislature's annual Vietnam Veterans Day at the Capitol. Vietnam Veterans from across the state joined Assembly Members and Senators for a luncheon, recognition ceremony on the floor of the Chamber, and a tour of the Capitol. We honor the brave men and women who served our great nation during the Vietnam War and remember the more than 58,000 who made the ultimate sacrifice. Thank you for your service, and welcome home.

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
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

NYS Veterans App and Other Helpful NYS Mobile Apps:

<https://www.ny.gov/mobileapps>

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>

Find Your Local Vet Center: <https://www.va.gov/find-locations/>

Lifetime Liberty Pass: <https://veterans.ny.gov/lifetime-liberty-pass>

Non-Service-Connected Pension: <https://veterans.ny.gov/non-service-connected-pension>

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.



ASSOCIATION FOR
MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

To Advocate. To Educate. To Empower. Together.



Veterans & Service Member's Peer Support Groups

Online Support Groups

Thursdays 7pm-8pm

March 2026

- 03/05
- 03/19

May 2026

- 05/14
- 05/28

April 2026

- 04/02
- 04/16
- 04/30

June 2026

- 06/11
- 06/25

**For meeting link information*
please call the number down below*

Services offered through Dwyer:

- Individual and group support
- Volunteer opportunities
- Connection to services and benefits
- Provide a safe and healthy place to talk freely



Connect. Share. Heal.

Are you a Veteran or Service Member looking for a safe space to talk to others who understand? Join the Dwyer Project's Veteran Peer Support Groups:

- Shared Experience: Connect with fellow veterans who understand the challenges of military and civilian life.
- Supportive Community: Build friendships and find encouragement in a judgment free environment.
- Practical Tools: Learn coping strategies and share resources to support your well-being.

ELIGIBILITY:

Open to anyone who served.



Registration is not
Require for more info
call: **631.853.8345**



Our Locations

- 939 Johnson Avenue, Ronkonkoma, NY 11779
- 1380 Roanoke Avenue, Riverhead, NY 11901
- H. Lee Denison Building 100 Veterans Memorial Hwy, Hauppauge, NY 11788



Visit Our Website

www.mhaw.org
www.dwyerproject.org

Vietnam Veterans Day



Assemblyman Stern honoring Wayne Jackson, NYS Assembly Sergeant at Arms, and Assembly Members Ken Blankenbush and Angelo J. Morinello for their heroic service during the Vietnam War.



Chairman Stern introducing Vietnam Veterans from across the state on the Floor of the Assembly, and passing the resolution recognizing March 29th as Vietnam Veterans Day in the State of New York.

Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019

The Blue Water Navy (BWN) Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019 extended the presumption of herbicide exposure, such as Agent Orange, to Veterans who served in the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam between Jan. 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975.

Beginning Jan. 1, 2020, Veterans who served as far as 12 nautical miles from the shore of Vietnam, or who had served in the Korean Demilitarized Zone, are presumed to have been exposed to herbicides, such as Agent Orange, and may be entitled to service connected benefits for any of the 14 conditions related to herbicide exposure:

<https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardous-materials-exposure/agent-orange/>

Veterans with questions about benefits or filing a claim can visit the VA Agent Orange website,

<https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardous-materials-exposure/agent-orange/>

For Compensation for Surviving Spouses and Dependents please visit, <https://www.va.gov/family-and-caregiver-benefits/survivor-compensation/dependency-indemnity-compensation/> or please call 1-800-749-8387.

Benefits for Children of Vietnam Veterans

Benefits exist for certain children of Veterans who served in areas where Agent Orange and other chemicals were used. Visit <https://veterans.ny.gov/benefits-certain-children-vietnam-war-veterans> for information regarding the conditions covered, including spina bifida, congenital heart disease, hip dysplasia, and other medical conditions.

Veterans Benefits Advisors provide free representation for Vietnam War Veterans' children in disability compensation, VA-covered healthcare, and vocational rehabilitation claims and appeals. Contact the Department of Veterans' Services at 518-474-6114 to schedule a meeting with a Veterans Benefits Advisor.



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.

Long Island Cares **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/BAGGED GRAINS Pasta Rice (Brown/White)	 CANNED FRUITS Low Sugar Items No Sugar Added
 CANNED MEALS Soups Pasta Meals Soups	 CANNED PROTEINS Chicken Fish (Tuna, Salmon, etc.) Beans	 CANNED VEGETABLES Low Sodium Items No Salt Added
 COOKING & PANTRY Condiments/Spices Olive Oil Spices	 DAIRY Shelf-Stable Milk Canned/Condensed Dry Milk	 TOILETRIES Toilet Paper Tissues Paper Towels
 BABY SUPPLIES Formula Baby Food/Snacks Diapers	 EATING STAPLES 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 metals, cans, or plastic. • NO GLASS. <p style="font-size: x-small;">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.



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' Affairs Committee Updates

Bills Voted Out of Committee as of 3-10-2026

A9490, STERN

Chapter 666 of the Laws of 2025 requires DVS to provide information on its website about volunteer opportunities for veterans to serve as volunteer firefighters or EMS providers. This chapter amendment clarifies the information that DVS would be required to post, while maintaining the reason for the legislation - allowing veterans to use their skills to help communities.

SIGNED INTO LAW 2-13-2026

A9489, STERN

This bill would amend Chapter 677 of the Laws of 2025, which established a real property tax exemption for service members performing active duty in a combat zone, to make technical changes and clarify the criteria for eligibility, to facilitate implementation.

SIGNED INTO LAW 3-27-2026

A3397A, RAGA

This legislation would facilitate additional entries on the New York State Veterans Memorial Registry. This legislation will help make steps toward creating a more exhaustive list of all veteran memorials and monuments in New York State, resulting in the honoring of veterans, the education of the public, and the promotion of tourism.

PASSED ASSEMBLY 2-03-2026

A8057A, BRONSON

This bill establishes a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Veterans Coordinator to complete work under the direction of the Commissioner regarding the unique needs of LGBT veterans.

A10142, STERN

Legislation which would require the New York State Department of Veterans' Services, in consultation with the Department of Health, to conduct a study evaluating veteran healthcare in New York State.



Veterans' Affairs Committee Updates

A10163, LAVINE

This legislation directs the New York State Department of Veterans' Services to conduct a mandatory pre-release briefing for veterans incarcerated in state correctional institutions that explains federal and state veterans' benefits and how eligible individuals and families may access these benefits.

A10362A, GRIFFIN

This legislation would review the services that are currently available to veterans with service-connected disabilities by state and local veterans' service agencies and identify any deficiencies in the availability, accessibility and delivery of these services.

PASSED ASSEMBLY 3-16-2026

A10418, STERN

This bill seeks to expand and improve the operation of the Veterans' Services Commission.

PASSED ASSEMBLY 3-16-2026

A10420, CASHMAN

Legislation which would provide greater assistance to veterans in upgrading their character discharge, changing their reason for discharge or seeking any other relief available through the Discharge Review Board or Board for Correction of Military or Naval records for their branch of service on the federal level.

PASSED ASSEMBLY 3-16-2026



To view our digital newsletter, with all embedded links, please scan the QR code below:

