

Dear Neighbor,

We owe so much to the brave New Yorkers who fought to defend our country and the freedoms we hold so dear. From supporting organizations like Honor Flight to passing legislation that looks out for our veterans, I'll always work to ensure these heroes receive the support and services they need.

The transition back to civilian life isn't always an easy one. When veterans return home, the last thing they should be worried about is where their next paycheck will come from or how they will feed their families. In this guide, you'll find a list of resources available to these heroes, as well as a comprehensive list of local, state and federal organizations that offer support to veterans when they return home.

You'll also find information on legislation that I passed during the 2019 legislative session that will help veterans heal from injuries or trauma they may have sustained during their service, obtain full benefits and protect their hard-earned compensation.



Moving forward, I'll keep fighting to help these courageous men and women begin the next chapter of their lives. Additionally, to ensure they receive the recognition they've earned, I'll continue working alongside our federal partners to help veterans restore lost or damaged medals. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to reach out to my office for assistance.

Sincerely,

A blue ink handwritten signature of Billy Jones.

Billy Jones
Member of Assembly, 115th District

Helping Veterans Take Honor Flight

Since taking office in 2017, Jones has been a proud advocate for the North Country Honor Flight, an organization that helps give veterans the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C., to visit our nation's war memorials. In September, Jones joined 15 men and women, including one World War II veteran, seven Korean War veterans and seven Vietnam War veterans on their journey to the capital for the 29th Honor Flight.



"Assemblyman Jones didn't just accompany these veterans, he also worked tirelessly to assist them throughout the day. Whether it was unloading or loading wheelchairs, helping veterans get around or ensuring they were well taken care of during their trip, Jones was there to help." – Joe Visgaitis, Honor Flight Volunteer



Additionally, Jones has taken the lead on one of the Honor Flight's most successful fundraisers, the annual Santa Sprint 5K. The Santa Sprint was established by the Rouses Point Rotary Club five years ago. Jones began hosting the race in 2017 and has helped raise thousands of dollars for future Honor Flights. Last year's race raised over \$5,000 and had almost 100 participants, including World War II Army nurse Dorothy Leclair, 97, who braved the cold to participate.

"Assemblyman Jones has been an outspoken advocate for the North Country Honor Flight." – Barry Finnegan, Director of North Country Honor Flight

Veteran Resources

Veterans Service Agencies

Clinton County:
518-565-4720

Franklin County:
518-481-1540

St. Lawrence County:
315-386-4754

Education

Federal benefits. The federal government offers several programs for veterans and service persons seeking assistance for education or vocational training. Visit the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs at www.va.gov or call 800-827-1000. You can also contact the NYS Division of Veterans' Services at 888-838-7697 for more information.

If you meet the requirements under the provisions of the GI Bill Fairness Act of 2011, you may be eligible for tuition and fees if attending private colleges and universities in New York and six other states. For more information, visit www.benefits.va.gov/gibill.

State Veterans Tuition Awards.

Eligible veterans are those who served in Vietnam, Afghanistan or the Persian Gulf, have earned an Expeditionary Medal. Awards are set at the SUNY rate of tuition. These awards apply to full-time study and part-time study for eligible veterans. Vocational students should contact the Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC) about tuition eligibility. In many instances, to establish eligibility, applicants must apply to HESC and must also apply for the state Tuition Assistance Program, known as TAP, and to the federal Pell Grant Program with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Visit www.hesc.ny.gov or call 888-697-4372 for information.

Children of Veterans (Regents) Awards.

Provides eligible children of deceased veterans, those missing in action or prisoners of war, or those service-connected disabled veterans with a disability rate of 40% or greater with an annual, noncompetitive monetary award up to \$450 per year. The parent must be a New York State resident or must have been a New York State resident at time of death.

Military Service (MERIT) Recognition Scholarships.

Available to certain dependents of members of the armed forces or state organized militia who, any time after Aug. 2, 1990, while performing their military duties, died, were severely and permanently disabled or missing in action. The service member must have

been a New York State resident at the time of the event.

Operation Recognition. Awards high school diplomas to veterans who served during World War II, the Korean War or the Vietnam War who left school before graduating. GED recipients are also eligible. For more information, call the New York State Education Department 518-474-8940.

Career advancement

Employment services. Under the Veterans Bill of Rights for Employment Services, veterans are entitled to priority service at all NYS Department of Labor offices in job referrals, employment counseling, testing and other services. Visit www.labor.ny.gov/vets/vetintropage.shtm for more information.

Review of discharge. Military Boards of Review have authority to correct and upgrade most discharges based on facts presented for consideration. Call 800-827-1000 and ask for DD Form 293 and DD Form 149.

Civil service

Federal benefits. On competitive exams, there is a 10-point preference for eligible disabled veterans and a 5-point preference for wartime honorably discharged veterans. Some requirements may be waived and special priority given in particular job categories. Unremarried surviving spouses, certain spouses and mothers of disabled veterans may also be eligible for preference. Visit www.military.com.

State and local benefits. Civil service examination fees are waived for veterans. Credit preferences and retention rights are available for disabled and nondisabled veterans for competitive positions. Some competitive positions are filled by appointment for qualified wartime veterans with disabilities. For an application and program information, visit www.cs.ny.gov/rp55. You can also call 518-233-3118 or 866-297-4356.

Tax exemptions

Property tax exemption. Municipalities have the option to grant an exemption. This provides a property tax exemption of 15% of assessed value for veterans who served during wartime, and an additional 10% exemption for those who served in a combat zone. Disabled veterans are provided with an additional exemption equal to one-half of their service-connected disability rating multiplied by the assessed value of the property. School districts may offer up to 15% reduction in assessed value if a local resolution was passed. Check with your assessor to determine

the maximum exemption limits in your community. Veterans who have received the Armed Forces, Navy, Marine Corps or Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal are eligible, and, under certain conditions, members of the reserves are also eligible.

Eligible funds tax exemption. This benefit provides a partial exemption where property owned by a veteran (or certain other persons designated in the law) has been purchased with funds, such as a pension, bonus or insurance monies, referred to as "eligible funds."

Cold War veterans exemption. This exemption is available for residential property of veterans who served during the period covering Sept. 2, 1945, to Dec. 26, 1991, and who do not receive eligible funds or alternative veterans' exemptions.

Surviving spouses who have not remarried may also be eligible for all three exemptions. These exemptions are not automatic and are not provided by all municipalities. Veterans should contact their local assessor's office for information and an application. Visit www.tax.ny.gov/pit/property/exemption/vetexempt.htm or call 888-838-7697 for additional details.

Income. Military pay received for active service as a member of the United States Armed Services in an area designated as a combat zone is exempt from New York State, New York City and Yonkers income taxes. To learn more about these exemptions and to access the forms, visit www.tax.ny.gov/pit/file/military_page.htm.

Disability benefits

Compensation. Veterans may apply for compensation for a service-connected disability at any time. The disability rating is based on the severity of the condition and the reduction in earning power. Visit www.benefits.va.gov/compensation for more information.



Veteran Resources



Non-service connected disability pension. A monthly pension, based on a financial means test, may be available for eligible wartime veterans with disabilities who are no longer able to work. Veterans must be permanently and totally disabled or have reached the age of 65. Visit www.benefits.va.gov/pension for more information.

Licenses and permits. Veterans with a 40% or greater disability rating are eligible for low-cost hunting and fishing licenses and free use of state parks, historic sites and recreational sites, with a park pass. Visit store.usgs.gov/faq#US-Military or call 866-472-4332 to get yours.

Hearing aids. This is a federal benefit. A veteran first has to register at a local VA Medical Center. If eligible, the hearing aid, repairs and future batteries would be provided at no charge. Visit www.prosthetics.va.gov/psas/hearing_aids.asp for more details.

Blindness

Federal benefits. Blindness need not be service-connected. Guide dogs and electronic and mechanical aids may be available. Visit www.ebenefits.va.gov.

State benefits. An annuity is available to blind wartime veterans and qualified unremarried, surviving spouses. Visit www.veterans.ny.gov/content/new-york-state-blind-annuity-program to download a form. To find out the amount of the annuity, contact the New York State Division of Veterans' Services at 888-838-7697.

Home accessibility grants

Federal benefits. Veterans who are totally and permanently disabled may be eligible for grants to adapt their home to meet their wheelchair needs. There are two grant programs at www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/adaptedhousing.asp.

State benefits. Seriously disabled veterans who have received federal funds for houses with special fixtures can be exempt from property taxes. The same exemption applies to the veteran's surviving spouse, not remarried, who

may transfer the exemption to any new residence. Visit www.veterans.ny.gov/content/property-tax-exemptions-veterans.

The New York Access to Home for Heroes Program allows experienced municipalities and not-for-profit corporations to apply for a grant to adapt homes for disabled veterans.

Mental Health

The New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH). OMH provides a Mental Health Program Directory on its website which allows you to:

- Search for mental health programs by community, program category or subcategory. Click on Military Personnel and Families.
- View program details including program name, address and phone number.

www.omh.ny.gov
Crisis line: 800-273-8255 (press 1)
General information: 800-597-8481
Crisis text line: Text "Got5" to 741-741

Veterans Affairs (VA) PTSD Program Locator. Use the Program to see if there is a specialized mental health program near you.

www.va.gov
Crisis line: 800-273-8255 (press 1)

Vet Centers. Centers are operated by the VA's Readjustment Counseling Service.

877-222-8387
www.vetcenter.va.gov

Military OneSource. Their website offers confidential help to military members, veterans and families regarding relationships, finances, legal issues, health and wellness, education and employment, on- and off-base living, deployment and transition concerns.

www.militaryonesource.mil
800-342-9647

Substance Abuse

New York State Addictions HOPEline. This resource offers help 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Your call is anonymous and confidential.

Visit the NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) website to locate a certified service provider by name, city or county.

877-8-HOPENY (877-846-7369)
www.oasas.ny.gov

Visit www.findaddictiontreatment.ny.gov for New York State certified outpatient or bedded programs for treatment.

VA Medical Centers. Find a comprehensive listing and explanation of:

- health benefits and topics, online pharmacy information
- compensation, education and training, home loans, life insurance, vocational rehabilitation benefits
- burial information including benefits, scheduling, headstones, markers and medallions, presidential memorial certificates and a nationwide gravesite locator

www.va.gov
General information: 800-827-1000
Access a list of VA and Vet Center facilities.

Suicide Prevention

The Suicide Prevention Center of New York State. Available resources include:

- contact information
- information and educational materials
- state and local prevention and support services

Call the hotline number below if you or someone you know needs immediate help.

www.preventsuicideny.org
Hotline: 800-273-8255 (press 1)

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. This national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Veterans, family members or friends can access Veterans Chat through the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline website. Pressing 1 routes calls to the Veterans Crisis Line.

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
800-273-TALK (8255), Veterans press 1

Deaf and hard of hearing veterans can go to this website to chat: www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/for-deaf-hard-of-hearing



Legislative Accomplishments

Assemblyman Jones passed legislation that:

- Helps veterans suffering from combat-related injuries rebuild their lives by allowing counties to set up veterans courts that provide treatment, mentoring and other services (A.5937);
- Waives state fees for marriage licenses for active duty members of the armed forces and authorizes municipalities to do the same (Ch. 177 of 2019); and
- Prohibits “pension poaching” of veterans, where businesses falsely claiming to be advocate organizations scam elderly and disabled veterans out of their savings (Ch. 183 of 2019).



202 U.S. Oval, Plattsburgh, NY 12903

PRSRT STD.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Albany, NY
Permit No. 75

Assemblyman Billy Jones:



Look inside to find a list of
**resources for veterans
and their families**



Assemblyman Billy Jones is honoring our veterans

Look inside to find a list of resources
for veterans and their families

202 U.S. Oval, Plattsburgh, NY 12903 • 518-562-1986 • jonesb@nyassembly.gov