



Over a 100 years ago, Veterans of the “war to end all wars” recognized that soldiers and sailors returning home from the battlefields would need help to successfully transition from warrior to civilian life. Thus, The American Legion was born as an organization of war-time Veterans committed to identifying, supporting, and implementing programs aiding former members of the Armed Forces and their families, as well perpetuating Americanism and the ideas of freedom and democracy.

The American Legion Department of New York reaffirms the organization’s principles and a commitment to all Veterans in providing advocacy, diligence, and talent in developing meaningful and timely proposals to present to elected state representatives for consideration as potential legislation, as well the National Organization for Congressional consideration.

During the coming year The Department of New York will champion these resolutions and proposals respectfully and affirmatively, seeking support from our state legislators, reminding them of why and for whom we want specific legislation enacted.

Many of our returning Veterans come home physically and emotionally scarred by the horrors of war. Issues confronting these Veterans often are immediate and literally a matter of life or death. Too many of today’s returning warriors are battling homelessness, suicide, and the need for employment. As the number of woman Veterans continues to grow, additional focus and emphasis must be placed on the care and treatment of our woman Veterans. In looking toward the future, we can’t forget the children of our returning Veterans and the impact multiple deployments of one or more parents has on them, as well as the needs of Veteran caregivers.

The American Legion Department of New York recognizes these concerns and calls upon our New York State Legislature and Governor to join us in reaching out and helping our Veterans by enacting legislation or policies designed to meet those needs.

The American Legion acknowledges that health and mental health care are primarily the responsibility of the Department of Veterans Affairs, but encourages New York State to muster support for any-and-all viable treatments that offer help for our military service men and women dealing with the trauma of war.

The American Legion Department of New York family is the voice of over 200,000 veterans, service members, and their families. As a resolutions-based organization, the American Legion’s positions represent the views of its members. They are based on the four pillars: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth.

This report highlights the top issues the American Legion will fight for in 2023

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**THE AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF NEW YORK**

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA



 **AMERICAN
LEGION**

**Serving America and its Veterans
for over 100 years**

Updated August 2023

1. “Be the One” Campaign: Today, the No. 1 issue facing the veteran community is suicide, according to the **National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report**. Approximately 17-22 veterans or servicemembers take their lives daily. That’s more than 6,000 annually. The rate of suicide for veterans is more than 50% higher than that of non-veteran adults. As the Global War on Terrorism continues, more veterans will face mental health issues like post-traumatic stress disorder. At its core, The American Legion is activating a national platform to reduce the rate of veteran suicide. The Be the One campaign will:

- Destigmatize asking for mental health support by creating opportunities for those with mental health issues to speak freely and get the help they need.
- Provide peer-to-peer support and resources in local communities.
- Deploy FDA-approved therapeutics for veterans to identify issues and find resources for support.

We urge the New York State Legislature and state agencies to provide greater awareness and to keep funding programs and groups dedicated to supporting veterans and their families.

2. Boys State: American Legion Boys State is a week-long program that immerses high school Juniors in citizenship and leadership training. They learn the practical aspects of Government as it exists in New York State and recognize that the individual is integral to the character and success of government. We urge New York State to authorize an annual \$150,000 grant to the host school for this critical program with over 700 participants yearly. Continuation of this grant will ensure the financial well-being of the program while maintaining an essential educational opportunity for our state’s young men.

We urge the New York State Legislature and the appropriate state agency to create a line item dedicating \$150,000 yearly to American Legion Boys State.

3. Veterans Mental Health: The American Legion also focuses on alternative treatment for mental health issues such as Post Traumatic Stress (PTS) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). The American Legion believes alternatives to the cycle of opioid medications will provide vital help to working service members and improve the quality of life for them and their families. Several actions have been taken at the state and national level to address this, including:

Requests to the Governor and New York State Legislature to pursue, identify, and recommend viable alternative treatments to assist war-time veterans in assuming their rightful role as leaders and contributing citizens of The Empire State. The American Legion encourages New York State to muster support for any viable treatments that offer help for our military service men and women dealing with the trauma of war.

The American Legion Department of New York calls upon our State Legislature to provide Congress with a Resolution urging the establishment and implementation of alternative treatments for PTS and TBI and to ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers such treatment for afflicted veterans and military personnel. In doing so, New York State would demonstrate support for The American Legion’s national effort to give veterans and service members needing treatment for brain injuries and mental stress the best care and research in alternative treatment and other forms of therapy. **(Was res #25 2016)**

The American Legion Department of New York requests that the Governor and the State Legislature pursue alternative treatments to assist wartime veterans so they may return to a productive role in our communities. Alternatives to addictive medication, such as peer-to-peer counseling, are effective.

4. USS Turner Resolution: The American Legion Department of New York urges action be taken to identify the remains of the crewmen killed aboard the USS Turner that exploded and sank on January 3rd, 1944, outside New York harbor, killing 136 crewmen. The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) states that: without an Xfile, a file that documents the circumstances of the recovery of the remains and other pertinent information, building a case for disinterment is difficult. In a letter dated August 6, 2019, from Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency: “Therefore, DPAA scientific staff have no means of comparing biological profile information to determine which of the 136 missing Sailors from USS Turner are associated with the Unknowns. While DPAA lacks the required evidence to request disinterment of the four graves, we continue to look for innovative ways to pursue disinterment and fulfill current DoD policies.”

The American Legion Department of New York requests that the Governor and the State Legislature take immediate action to establish a commission to assist in the identification of these fallen heroes.

5. The American Legion urges the New York State Legislature to recognize June 8th as U.S.S. Liberty Day formally. We also recommend that a Memorial be dedicated in Albany, NY, befitting the courage and dedication of the U.S.S. Liberty crew and the 5 New York sailors who lost their lives. (Formerly resolution #18,2018) Senator Helming addressed this in 2018. S.738 (Helming) passed 2018. It did not include a memorial. 2019 S.7620A/A.9067 Chartered. We want the Senate to reintroduce this during the next session.



The following are previously introduced resolutions that passed:

As of January 5, 2021, **H.R. 7105** bill was passed, and the President signed it into law. This bill has a lot of veteran-related issues. Under TITLE II – BENEFITS Subtitle C Burial Matters. There are eight different sections to read upon. TITLE V DEBORAH SAMPSON covers concerns of women veterans in various aspects.

Firing ceremonial guns on public and private property for military funerals is now permissible. The 2023 final budget exempted these funerals from the “sensitive locations” clause. This was not in the form of a resolution.

Resolution 22 2018. It does appear under Section 16 of Veterans’ Service Law. It has increased for counties. The initial amount was \$10,000, which seems to have been raised to \$25,000. Mission accomplished.

Resolution 19 2018 Veterans Services’ Law. It has not been specified that Directors of Veterans’ Service must have five-year terms. ***It needs to be reintroduced.***

The following are some other bills making their way through the halls of Albany:

“S00142 Establishes the hire a vet program; provides grants to municipalities where a veteran is hired and employed, for not less than one year and not less than thirty-five hours each week; grants up to \$5,000 for a qualified veteran and \$15,000 for a qualified veteran who is disabled.”

“S00180 Directs the state director of veterans’ affairs to submit a plan once every five years to the veterans’ affairs commission for the provision of services to service-disabled veterans; directs such commission to approve such plan before its implementation.”

“S00228 Establishes giving internships for disabled veterans not fully employed (G.I.V.E. Back NY); awards ten percent of available internships in the assembly youth participation program and the senate student program to eligible honorably discharged veterans with service-connected disabilities.”

“S2328/A2793 Classifies military monuments and memorials as parkland. It also provides that military monuments or memorials erected or constructed on the property of a municipal corporation shall require authorization by an act of the legislature prior to any change in status including alienation, development, leasing, transfer, sale or discontinuance.” (Pending the Governors signature).