

EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Executive Order No. 12: Establishing the New York State Council on Returning Veterans and Their Families.

WHEREAS, thousands of New York State residents are veterans who have served in armed conflicts over the last several decades, including Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq; and

WHEREAS, many currently deployed military personnel, including National Guard and Reserve members, will return from ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq; and

WHEREAS, a significant number of veterans who served on active duty in armed hostilities are at risk to return home with – or later develop – physical disabilities, medical conditions, mental illnesses and/or substance abuse disorders, including but not limited to traumatic brain injury and post traumatic stress disorder, impacting not only those veterans but their families as well; and

WHEREAS, it is important to assure that all available resources are marshaled to help returning veterans and their families in addressing these challenges; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary to ensure that federal, state and other funding and service resources which are or become available to help veterans and their families, especially those experiencing multiple challenges, are coordinated as well as possible and used in the most effective and efficient manner; and

WHEREAS, it is critical that veterans and their families are aware of and have access to such resources and services; and

WHEREAS, increased public awareness of the sacrifices and needs of returning veterans and their families is essential to help returning veterans transition back into their home communities and workplaces; and

NOW, THEREFORE, I, DAVID A. PATERSON, Governor of the State of New York, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and Laws of the State of New York do hereby order as follows:

1. There is hereby established the New York State Council on Returning Veterans and Their Families (the Council).

2. The members of the Council shall consist of the Director of the Division of Veterans' Affairs, the Commissioner of the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, the Commissioner of the Office of Mental Health, the Adjutant General of the Division of Military and Naval Affairs, and the Commissioner of the Department of Labor, or their designees, and two additional members appointed by the Governor, including one representative of local government and one veteran or family member of a veteran. The Director of the Division of Veterans' Affairs or a designee thereof shall serve as the Chair of the Council.

3. A majority of the members of the Council shall constitute a quorum and all recommendations of the Council shall require approval of a majority of the total members of the Council.

4. No member of the Council shall be disqualified from holding any public office or employment, nor shall he or she forfeit any such office or employment by virtue of his or her appointment hereunder. Members of the Council shall receive no compensation for their services but shall be allowed their actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their functions hereunder. All members of the Council shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor and vacancies shall be filled by the Governor.

5. The Council is charged with developing recommendations for a comprehensive State strategy to accomplish the following:

a. Increase public awareness of the needs of returning veterans and their families and the value that veterans offer to communities as a result of their service;

b. Conduct education and outreach to ensure that veterans and their families are aware of available resources and services to help them address physical health and mental health and substance abuse problems resulting from active duty;

c. Properly identify veterans and their families and ensure that they are aware of and have access to available benefits and services;

d. Identify and eliminate barriers to the prompt and accurate diagnosis of physical disabilities, medical conditions, mental illnesses and/or substance abuse disorders affecting returning veterans and their families;

e. Identify and eliminate barriers to service so that veterans, particularly those with more than one disability or condition, have sufficient access to needed resources and services;

f. Encourage the development of a viable referral network, including peer-to-peer systems;

g. Maximize the resources available to help returning veterans and their families address physical disabilities, medical conditions, mental illnesses and/or substance abuse disorders arising from active service, including funding and services available through federal, state and non-governmental sources; and

h. Coordinate resources and services available for returning veterans and their families that address physical disabilities, medical conditions, mental illnesses and/or substance abuse disorders resulting from active duty to maximize efficiency and effectiveness.

6. The Chair shall establish an advisory body comprised of various stakeholders representing a broad range of interests related to the well-being of veterans and their families, who can call upon their experience and expertise to assist the Council in its work. Membership on such advisory body should reflect the diversity of veterans and their families in New York State so as to be culturally competent.

7. The Council shall issue a report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor on or before September 30, 2009 with periodic updates as are deemed appropriate by the Chair, describing the Council's activities during the preceding year and setting forth the Council's recommendations for the development and implementation of a comprehensive State strategy in furtherance of the purposes of this Order.

8. Every agency, department, office, division or public authority of this State shall cooperate with the Council and furnish such information and assistance as the Council determines is reasonably necessary to accomplish its purpose.

(L.S.)

GIVEN under my hand and the Privy Seal of the State in the City of Albany, this eleventh day of November in the year two thousand eight.

BY THE GOVERNOR

/S/ David A. Paterson

/s/ William J. Cunningham

Secretary to the Governor

