



TWU Local 100 Veterans Committee Newsletter

July, 2014



Vets Pension Bill This Close to Passage

At TWU Local 100's 2012 Mass Membership at Brooklyn Tech, President John Samuelson heard the members' need for a Veteran's Committee and endorsed the idea. RTO VP Kevin Harrington stepped up and agreed to chair it. With the help of longtime Veterans advocate Phil Caruana, who is an Army veteran of Vietnam, and others including Paul Piazza (Army) from Stations, Kevin McCawley (USMC) from MOW, Joe Costales (Army) from RTO and Dexter Victory (Army) also from RTO, things got into gear quickly. We began to examine all options for improving the lives of our brother and sister veterans. We decided that legislative action to enhance pensions was the way to go. It's the working people of America who fight our nation's wars, and many of them become civil servants after their military service. Enhancing their pensions based on military service is a direct way to materially benefit their lives and



Assemblywoman Amy Paulin stands in the Capitol building with other legislative leaders, TWU vets and supporters to move bill forward

give them more security in old age.

VP Harrington put forward the idea that ALL Veterans should qualify for the pension buyback, not just some Veterans of a limited number of conflicts, which had been arbitrarily selected by the state legislature back in 2000. Under that law, veterans serving in certain

time periods – for WWII, Korea, and Vietnam, and those who had combat ribbons for later conflicts, could buy up to three years pension credit for military time served. Everyone else was out of luck – especially women, who were not sent into combat and therefore could not produce the ribbon, even though they served their

country in the military.

This gross inequality formed the basis of our campaign. Early in 2013, we started organizing a contingent of vets to be part of Local 100's Lobby Day at the State Capitol. Our Political Action Committee, headed by Marvin Holland, put veterans' issues on their lobbying agenda. PAC recognized that down the road, when the bill would be making its way through the legislative process, we would need help from other influential unions, like New York's Teachers (UFT) and Firefighters (UFA), to get it passed.

As the Veterans' Committee worked to understand the dimensions of the issue, we had discussions with key players in Albany like State Senator William Larkin, Jr. (R-Newburgh), who took up our cause and wrote a bill covering ALL veterans. Larkin is a veteran of three wars. In the other chamber, Democratic State Assemblywoman Amy Pau-

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How the Buy-Back Works

As of 6/19/14, the Veterans Equality Bill, Larkin-S7839 (S4714)/ Paulin-A6974, passed both houses in the New York State Legislature!! This is GREAT news for all TWU Local 100 Vets!! In fact, it's great news for any civil service veteran in New York State!

The TWU Veterans Committee was proud to lead the fight in this important victory that will benefit so many workers throughout the State! Let's take a moment to reflect on what the passing of this bill means.

It means that, immediately after the Governor signs the bill into law, any civil service veteran, who was honorably discharged, working in New York State, will be able to buy back their military service time from the pension system up to a maximum of three years. A member with 22 years on the job now has 25, a member who has 25 years, now has 28, etc. For members that don't have the time to retire, and they need to retire, this could help them to make up the time needed.

Buying back your time from NYCERS will be easy and only requires filling out a form and submitting proof of service, such as a dd-214. Of course it is a pension BUY-back so you must pay for the time at the present rate. On average each member can expect to pay about \$6,000, which sounds like a lot of money until you realize that it usually pays itself back in its first year. All the years after that are just gravy.

We have it on good authority that the Governor will sign the bill into law in the early fall and it will take effect immediately. We would urge all veterans getting ready to retire to consider waiting an additional few months to take advantage of this huge benefit! All TWU Local 100 Veterans are urged to save your upcoming retro check and apply it towards this enormous gain! You won't regret it!



Veterans: Questions About Your Benefits?

Phil Caruana, Sr. a Vietnam Army Vet, is our Veterans Benefits Rep at TWU Local 100. He'll help you with filing for benefits, getting applications, and answering your questions.

Call Phil at 212-873-6000 ext. 2113.

We also have a 24-hour help line at 646-235-0783.

Phil can also be reached via email: pcaruana@twulocal100.org

As we reported in our previous issue, our ongoing efforts to secure the plaque that is on the front of the old NYC Transit Transportation building, located at 370 Jay St, are making progress. We, in the TWU Veterans Committee, are committed to preserving this plaque, dedicated to the TA workers who served our country in World War 2, and made the ultimate sacrifice, to ensure that the memory of these brave TWU service men and women will never be forgotten.



Don't Go Blocking Traffic — Unless You're a Veteran! US Army Vet and TWU Retiree Emily Allen waves traffic to a stop as TWU Local 100 veterans cross from tour buses to the entrance to the Capitol concourse during our last lobbying visit.

lin (D-Scarsdale) picked up bill the and put it before the Assembly. This began the bi-partisan support that made the bill, A.6974/S.4714, a legislative success.

A few months after the 2013 TWU Lobby Day, TWU Veterans went to Albany again on a bus, with many TWU Vets giving up their own time to participate. We lobbied hard, organizing teams to visit legislators, asking them to take a stand for Vets and co-sponsor the bill. Throughout the year, TWU Vets kept visiting and calling their legislators, urging them to co-sponsor the bill. Soon, nearly all the relevant Senate and Assembly committees had co-sponsors in the majority and finally, the majority of State Senators and State Assembly members were co-sponsors.

We returned to Albany twice more in 2014, once on TWU lobby Day in late March and again at a special TWU Veteran's lobby Day, in late April. Still, Committee members were being told that it could not succeed because it had an estimated cost of \$6 million. Although each eligible veteran would pay to buy back time (about \$6,000 for the three years, on average), extra money would still be needed, and that had to come from the state. Yet we held fast and continued to build support every week among legislators, trade unionists, and New York State Veterans organizations -- all of whom were contacted and lobbied by our own TWU Veteran's Committee.

The uniquely unfair position of women Veterans – who, because they were not allowed in combat positions, were not able to obtain the combat ribbons – was a key point which made our message powerful for many legislators. The TWU Veteran's Committee contacted all State women legislators and won widespread support



Veteran's Committee head Kevin Harrington and Member Kevin McCawley meet with bill's Senate sponsor, William Larkin.



Later, Sen. Larkin met in the hallway of the Capitol with Army vet and TWU Local 100 retiree Emily Allen, who reaffirmed our support for his efforts.

with only one female Assembly Democrat, Deborah Glick of Manhattan, not signing on.

TWU's PAC pushed a measure through the New York City Council supporting our bill, urging its passage by the State legislature, and petitioning the Governor to sign it. This sent an important message to the State that New York City was supporting the bill.

In early June, with the legislative session drawing to a close, things began to heat up. First, the Senate easily passed the bill which now had the Governor's support as well as bipartisan commitments from both houses. The Assembly passed it as well, after making a change in the funding for-



Veteran's Committee head members meet with (D-Co-Op City), who chairs the Veterans



Our Position — Everyone Who S

mula that didn't affect benefits or the amount Vets will have to pay. With the window closing on the legislative session, State Senator and bill sponsor Bill Larkin, 84, stayed up all night to re-write his bill to conform to the Assembly version.

And despite his mother's passing that same weekend, Brooklyn State Senator Marty Golden got the bill through his Committee and onto the floor for a final vote. The TWU Vet-



met with Assemblyman Michael Benedet-
ns Committee in the Assembly.



Served Deserves Equal Benefits

erans' Committee sent copies of our "Women Are Veterans Too" flyer to every State Assembly person on the day it came up for vote in the Assembly. On the floor state legislators -- especially women -- were waving our leaflet when the vote was held. It passed with a decisive majority. It now remains for Governor Cuomo to sign the bill, and we believe he will do so. Congratulations, TWU Veterans!! You did something many said couldn't be done.



State Assemblyman Ed Hennessey (D-Medford) has also signed on.

Standing With Us

Here is the Final Tally of Legislators who had co-signed and pledged support for the Veterans Equality Bill, before it was put to the floor for a vote, in both the Senate and the Assembly. Many people were surprised by the sheer magnitude of bi-partisan support that we were able to garner. (The percentage numbers in parentheses represent the actual percentage number of each house, taking into account for vacancies)

NYS Senators signed onto Bill S-4714 (s-7839) (49)(81.67%act)

*Introduced by: NYS Senator BILL LARKIN

*Co-Sponsored by: The Following NYS Senators; Addabbo, Avella, Ball, Bonacic, Breslin, Carlucci, De Francisco, Diaz, Dilan, Espallat, Farley, Flanagan, Gallivan, Gipson, Golden, Griffo, Grisanti, Hassell-Thompson, Hoylman, Kennedy, Klein, Krueger, Lanza, LatimerR, Lavalle, Little, Marchione, Martins, Maziarz, Montgomery, Nozzolio, O'Brien, Parker, Peralta, Perkins, Ranzenhofer, Ritchie, Rivera, Robach, Saviono, Serrano, Seward, Skelos, Smith, Stavisky, Tkaczyk, Young, Zeldin

NYS Assembly-people Signed onto Bill A-6974 (97)(69.29%act)

*Introduced by: NYS Assemblywoman AMY PAULIN (MS)

*Co-Sponsored by: The Following NYS Assembly-people; Schimel, Colton, Schimminger, Gunther, Ramos, Weprin, Hevesi, Roberts, Benedetto, Gantt, Steck, Russell, Rosenthal, Stec, Jaffee, Tedisco, Simanowitz, Saladino, Magnarelli, Brook-Krasny, Quart, Katz, Lupinacci, Nojay, Barrett, Skoufis, Santabarbara, Graf, Thiele, Mayer, Zebrowski, Sepulveda, Markey, Borelli, Ortiz, Camara, Simotas, Goldfeder, Titus, Clark, Malliotakis, Tenney, Otis, Abinanti, Pichardo, Cahill, Hennessey, Dinowitz, Fahy, Arroyo, Barclay, Blankenbush, Brindisi, Buchwald, Butler, Ceretto, Curran, Cusick, Davila, DenDekker, DiPietro, Duprey, Farrell, Fitzpatrick, Garbarino, Giglio, Gottfried, Hawley, Heastie, Hooper, Kearns, Kellner, Lalor, Lentol, Lifton, Lupardo, Magee, McDonald, McDonough, McLaughlin, Miller, Millman, Montesano, Oaks, Palmesano, Perry, Ra, Raia, Rivera, Rodriguez, Skartados, Solages, Sweeney, Titone, Weisenberg, Wright.

TWU Vets Gear Up for Toy Drive

The mission of the TWU Toys for Tots program and its parent organization, the U. S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program, is to collect new, unwrapped toys during October, November and December each year, and distribute those toys as holiday gifts to less fortunate children in the communities in which the campaign is conducted.

The goal of Toys for Tots is to deliver, through a new toy at the holiday season, a message of hope to less fortunate youngsters that will assist them in becoming responsible, productive, patriotic citizens.

TWU Veterans Committee Member Paul Piazza and other officers and activists from the Station Department organized a Toys for Tots Campaign with drop off points for toys during the 2013 Holiday Season at the TWU Hall and other locations. Like many other organizations, we helped to provide the needy and underprivileged children of New York City with a Happy Holiday.

Drop off locations were organized and toys were collected from TWU Local 100 members at our Mass Membership Meeting in downtown Brooklyn. It is this kind of help, such as was provided by our union brothers and sisters, that makes the Toys for Tots program able to provide an increasing amount of toys each year. We hope to repeat our efforts this coming year-end holiday season. TWU Veterans and TWU members interested in helping or contributing to this effort should call the Veteran's committee for contact information.



Veteran Distinction on NYS Drivers Licenses Now Available

As we reported in our last issue, residents who are military veterans can now apply for a special designation on their New York State driver's license when they apply for license renewal.

If you are a qualified U.S. military veteran, who was honorably discharged, and you have a NYS driver's license, learner's permit or non-driver photo ID card, you can have the word "Veteran" printed on the upper left hand of your photo document. This measure eliminates the need to carry separate documentation to prove that you are a veteran of the United States Armed Forces.

Since many local businesses across the state currently provide discounts to veterans, having a driver's license with a veteran's designation allows for more convenience and ease in presenting proof of service. A driver's license is generally acceptable proof of identification; it only makes sense to allow our nation's heroes to use it to show that they proudly answered our nation's call.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.dmv.ny.gov/armedforces.htm>



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The Chief

Civil Service **LEADER**

THE CIVIL EMPLOYEES' WEEKLY

To the Editor:

All Civil Service Veterans of New York State have occasion to celebrate, as bills were passed this week in the Senate and the Assembly treating all veterans as veterans, regardless of period of service or gender. These bills will cover all Veterans going forward into the future as well. Veterans coming home from Afghanistan and Iraq to Civil Service employment will now be covered.

This means, if the Governor signs the bill, that all Civil Service Veterans will be eligible to buy back up to three years of pension credit after five years of Civil Service employment. New York State now uses the Federal definition of a Veteran.

On Memorial Day the TWU Local 100 Veterans Committee participated in a joint ceremony with other Labor Unions at the Water Street Vietnam Veterans Memorial, in Manhattan, to commemorate the day and remember our fallen heroes.

Transport Workers Union President John Samuelsen organized the efforts through the TWU's Veteran's Committee, Political Action Committee, and rank and file TWU veterans. Nothing was spared by the TWU to get these bills passed. Organizing efforts went on throughout the last year.

We have to thank Senator William Larkin [R-Rockland] who initially wrote the bill at the urging of the TWU Veteran's Committee Chairperson Kevin Harrington, as well as Assemblywoman Amy Paulin [D-Scarsdale] who submitted a similar bill (A6974B) in the Assembly. We should also thank the Senate

Civil Service and Pension chairperson Senator Martin Golden, The Assembly Ways and Means chairperson Assemblyman Herman 'Denny' Farrell and Assembly Speaker and Rules committee chairperson Sheldon Silver, all of whom expedited the bill through their respective committees.

We now await the signature of our Governor on this momentous Veteran's Bill.

Thank You. New York State Veterans, for your Service and Sacrifice.

Sincerely,

Kevin Harrington
TWU Local-100
Veterans Committee Chairman
TWU Local-100 R.T.O.
Vice President



Heed the Call!



All TWU Local 100 Veterans are encouraged to join the TWU 100 veterans committee! You'll receive important updates on Veterans legislation and be able to join us in future events! Fill out and Return this form today! Fax # : 646-998-7152 Phone#: 212-873-6000 ext. 2059

Return to: Veterans Committee, TWU Local 100, 195 Montague Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201

Name _____ Pass # _____

Division _____ Email _____

Mailing Address _____

Phone # _____

Branch of Service _____ Years Served _____

