



***Community Report
from your Suffolk
County Legislator
Steve Stern***

February 2013

2013 Committee

Assignments

Chairman:

Veterans & Seniors

Vice-Chairman:

Public Works &
Transportation

Vice-Chairman:

Ways & Means

Member: Economic
Development &
Energy

Member:

Parks & Recreation

Dear Neighbors:



As the Chairman of the Veterans and Seniors Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature, I have the honor and privilege of working with and for the brave men and women who sacrifice so much to protect our way of life and our great nation. This newsletter contains important information for our veterans, seniors, their families and our entire community. Please know that my door is always open and that my staff, Deborah Harris, Mary Young, Bryan Galgano, and I are always available to assist

you. Feel free to stop by our district office, call, e-mail or write and we will be pleased to address your concerns. Our office is located at 1842 E. Jericho Turnpike, Huntington, NY 11743. You can reach us by phone at (631) 854-5100 or by e-mail at steve.stern@suffolkcountyny.gov. We look forward to hearing from you.



Protecting Our Veterans and the Public from Unscrupulous Solicitors

I recently co-sponsored legislation that strengthens registration and reporting requirements for not-for-profit organizations that solicit donations on behalf of veterans. Many organizations use paid professional solicitors to raise funds and too often, fail to disclose that a significant portion of monies donated do not go to veteran's assistance programs, but to the fundraisers themselves. Additionally, many solicitors dress in military-style gear or in uniform, even if they have not served in our armed forces. Suffolk County law now requires that not-for-profit organizations register with the Veterans Service Agency, disclose the percentage paid to solicitors, and provide detailed information about recipients of aid. The law strengthens requirements, including banning wearing military uniforms, requires the prominent display of permits and subjects those in violation of the law to fines and revocation of permits. Those wishing to make donations should ask to see the organization's Suffolk County permit. Our veterans and their families deserve our support and assistance. This measure will help ensure that donations are used to provide needed services to the brave men and women who protect our great nation.

Benefits and Programs Available For Veterans

Veterans can obtain a Suffolk County Veterans ID Card to access various discounts and programs for a wide range of businesses such as automotive, medical/dental, restaurant, hotel/motel and more. Details can be viewed at www.suffolkcountyny.gov/veterans/discountprogram. No appointments are needed, but it is recommended that you call ahead to 631-853-8387. Please present your DD-214 and Driver's License.

Veterans can purchase a Suffolk County Green Key Card for a discounted rate at Suffolk County parks and golf courses with proper proof of residency and discount status. Purchase locations and a list of approved proof of status for the card can be viewed at www.suffolkcountyny.gov/departments/parks/greenkeycard.

Half-Price Veterans Bus Fare Pilot Program in Place

Legislation that I co-sponsored established a one-year pilot program that reduces Suffolk County bus fares by one-half for one year for veterans to encourage ridership. The Suffolk County Department of Public Works will then determine the effects of the reduced fare on ridership. As Chairman of the Veterans and Seniors Committee, I have the privilege of working with and for the brave men and women who protect our great nation and our way of life. We owe them not just our gratitude but our meaningful support. I am proud to join with my colleagues in providing fare relief to our veterans.

Joseph Dwyer Peer-to-Peer Groups

Suffolk County has received state funding for a pilot program for the ***PFC Joseph Dwyer Program*** to help returning veterans cope with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) through a Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Program. PFC Dwyer enlisted in the Army after the terrorist attacks on our nation on September 11, 2001. He served honorably in Iraq but returned with PTSD and lost his life in 2008. Too many of our returning veterans are suffering in silence and there have been a record number of suicides in the past year. This program will enable our veterans to share their military experiences, ease their concerns and anxieties concerning life issues and transitioning from military to civilian life and provide support from others who understand and are experiencing the same challenges. Meetings are being conducted at multiple locations, and the schedule is flexible. Participation is totally anonymous and veterans can feel free to attend and share their experiences in strictest confidence. I encourage our veterans who may be suffering from PTSD, TBI or just want to talk to their peers to e-mail vetpeertopeer@suffolkcountyny.gov or call 631-853-8345. You are not alone.

Women's Healthy Heart Week

February 13-19 is "***Women's Healthy Heart Week***" in Suffolk County. Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death for American women. Many people believe that heart disease is a man's disease, but approximately 460,000 women die each year from heart disease in America. Many myths about heart disease can lead to unnecessary illness, disability and death. It is important for women and men to speak to their physicians to assess their risks and evaluate their lifestyles and take pro-active steps to maintain good health and quality of life. I encourage residents to visit the American Heart Association website, www.americanheart.org, for important information about heart health, risk factors for heart disease and steps we can all take to improve our health.

Strength and Hope Walk



I was proud to support the 148 mile "***Strength and Hope Walk***" to honor those lost on September 11, 2001, as well as the dedicated and tireless first responders who risked their lives and well-being to save victims and return those lost to their loved ones. Christopher Delaney, a 9-11 rescuer and Iraq War Veteran led the walk from Montauk Point to Ground Zero. Our entire nation owes Christopher and all who served our eternal respect and gratitude.

Taxable Status Day is Friday, March 1, 2013

A number of real property tax exemptions are available to residents of the Towns of Huntington and Babylon. Residents must file for these exemptions by March 1, 2013. I strongly encourage all who are eligible to take advantage of these programs.

The **Basic STAR** exemption is available to New Yorkers who own and live in their own home, condominium, or co-operative apartment, as a primary residence, provided their household income does not exceed \$500,000. This exemption does NOT have to be renewed annually.

Enhanced STAR is available to senior citizens aged 65 and older. If you currently receive the Basic Star exemption and will turn 65 by December 31, 2013, you must file for Enhanced Star benefits. To be eligible for this program, the property must be the owner's primary residence and the application for the exemption must be submitted by March 1st. First time applicants must have an adjusted gross income, minus taxable IRA distributions, that does not exceed \$79,050 for the 2011 tax year and submit proof of age and income documentation. The Enhanced STAR exemption must be renewed each year, by submitting a renewal application and income documentation or through the automatic renewal Income Verification Program.

Limited Income Seniors Exemption: Not to be confused with the **Enhanced STAR** exemption for seniors, the Senior Citizen and Low Income Exemption is for senior households with annual incomes of less than \$37,400, including social security, for residents of the Town of Huntington and the Town of Babylon. Those 65 and older, or who will turn 65 in 2013 should apply. The property must be the homeowner's legal and primary residence.

Volunteer Firefighters and Ambulance Workers Exemption is available to enrolled volunteers with at least 5 years of active service. The property must be owned by the volunteer or the volunteer and spouse and be located in the town in which the volunteer serves. This exemption must be renewed annually.

Veterans Exemptions: Veterans, spouses and un-remarried widows and widowers of Veterans may be eligible for a number of programs, including an exemption for those who served during wartime, those who served in active combat, Cold War Veterans who served during non-wartime years and Gold Star Parents. For current and new applicants, the property must be the primary and legal residence of the veteran and the veteran must supply a DD-214 received upon separation from the service. Other programs may have different residency requirements, so please contact the assessor if you have any questions.

Persons with Disabilities and Low Income Exemptions: Disabled persons with documented proof of disability and with annual incomes of less than \$37,400, including social security, may be eligible for an exemption. The property must be the primary and legal residence of the owner-applicant.

Home Improvement Exemptions: Homeowners may be eligible for a phased-in tax exemption for certain home improvements. The Towns of Huntington and Babylon have different requirements, so please contact them at the number listed below.

For additional information about these exemptions please call the Assessor's office: Town of Huntington: (631) 351-3226 or visit http://www.huntingtonny.gov/permit_pics/1403.pdf. Town of Babylon: (631) 957-3014 or visit <http://www.townofbabylon.com/DocumentCenter/View/123>

E-Newsletter Saves Taxpayer Dollars

Once again, I have joined with my colleagues in the Legislature in voluntarily suspending the mailing of newsletters to constituents to save more than \$100,000 in taxpayer money over the next year. My newsletters will now be published electronically and can be accessed at <http://legis.suffolkcountyny.gov>. If you would like to receive e-mail updates and future e-newsletters, please send your e-mail address to: steve.stern@suffolkcountyny.gov



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Legislator Stern Collecting “Cell Phones for Soldiers”

Our office is collecting “Cell Phones for Soldiers” to provide support for our troops and their families. “Cell Phones for Soldiers” recycles used cell phones and uses the proceeds to purchase pre-paid calling cards for our troops serving overseas. Please bring your used cell phones to my office: 1842 E. Jericho Turnpike, Huntington, NY. For further information, please call (631) 854-5100. Thank you for your support.



Contact Legislator Stern:

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Legislator Steve Stern In Our Community



Steve swears in Staci Katz of Elwood, as the 16th LD representative to the Suffolk County Women's Advisory Commission.



Steve honored outgoing Fire Chief Richard Granahan of the Dix Hills Fire Department at its annual Installation Dinner.



Steve honored Deer Park Girl Scouts, Diana Marie Cotrone and Kelsey Rose Heyne, recipients of the Gold Award, the highest honor in Girl Scouting.



Steve presented a proclamation to Nova Shek, a 6th grader at Candlewood Middle School. Nova raised funds to donate I-Pads to a school for children with Autism.



Steve joined the Wounded Warriors Amputee Softball Team who toured Suffolk County. These athletes have overcome serious injury and are truly an inspiration to us all.



Steve welcomed the Half Hollow Hills Legislation Committee, students interested in government, for a **"Lunch and Learn" Mock Legislative Session.**