

# News Alert

## Rensselaer County Legislature Office of the Minority 270-2892

August 14, 2008

### **Legislators Call for a Pro-active Benefits Program for Veterans**

Legislator Flora Fasoldt introduced a resolution that passed by a unanimous vote at the August 12 Rensselaer County Legislative meeting urging Congress to enact the bill entitled “Providing Real Outreach to Vets” or “PRO-VETS.” (HR 6494). The legislation was written and introduced by Congresswoman Kirsten Gillibrand, a member of the Armed Services Committee, to require the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs to notify separating service members of their eligibility for their earned veterans’ benefits.

New York's 20<sup>th</sup> Congressional District, which Gillibrand represents, has approximately 60,791 veterans – the largest in the state of New York. Currently, many veterans do not receive benefits they have earned and qualified for due to the complex benefits system. Under the existing law, veterans must go to the Veterans Administration office to learn what they are eligible to receive and to apply. This bill changes that, and makes it the responsibility of the VA to tell vets what they are eligible to receive and requires the VA to send application materials to the veteran.

“Servicemen and women have served our country valiantly and should not have to hunt for the benefits they have earned,” said Gillibrand. “We have vets that have suffered severe brain injuries and others that are too busy putting their lives back together to try and navigate the complex benefits system. By mandating that the VA tell vets what they are eligible to receive, I hope that fewer people will fall through the cracks and will get the medical assistance they need.”

The current benefits system is a passive one where veterans may miss out on benefits they are not aware of. “The brave men and women serving our country deserve to receive the benefits they are entitled to. This legislation is an important step to streamline the process and make it more accessible to our service men and women,” said Legislator Flora Fasoldt.



Congresswoman Kirsten Gillibrand  
New York State 20<sup>th</sup> Congressional District



Rensselaer County Legislator Flora Fasoldt  
District 4: Nassau, Sand Lake, Schodack