

**New York City Council Hearing  
September 30, 2014**

**Hearing to amend the New York City Charter and Administrative Code to establish a  
Department of Veterans' Affairs**

Good afternoon my name is Audrey Carr. I direct the Veterans Justice Project (VJP) at Legal Services NYC. The primary focus of our project is to advocate for veterans who are struggling with housing, subsistence income, employment opportunity, family stability and other crucial needs. We provide direct legal representation to low-income veterans who are facing eviction, grappling with consumer debt and income security and we assist veterans connect to social and mental health services. Our advocates also train staff of the various veterans serving organizations in the City on legal issues affecting the veteran community. Our project serves as a national model on how to provide legal services to military members, veterans and their dependents.

We strongly support the City's efforts to create a Department of Veterans Affairs. While we have worked closely with the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs (MOVA) and applaud its work on behalf of the city's veterans, MOVA, unfortunately, is limited both in scope and power. Having a Veterans Department within the City's apparatus will bring legitimacy to the City's concern for its veterans' population. More importantly, however, a City Department of Veterans

Affairs will be instrumental in advocating for veterans to ensure that state and local laws benefitting veterans are enforced.

As the Committee members are well aware, New York City's veterans are struggling. The VJP sees first-hand how veterans face many stumbling blocks when dealing with City, State and Federal agencies. Every day we represent veterans in housing court, family court and in other forums to help them secure benefits and other rights. Although the state and the city have laws in place that provide preferences for veterans to secure housing, employment and other benefits, these preferences are routinely not enforced. For instance, we have repeatedly sued the City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development for its refusal to apply the veterans preference to veterans seeking housing in Mitchell-Lama housing developments. For instance, we have repeatedly sued the City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development for its refusal to apply the veterans preference to veterans seeking housing in Mitchell-Lama housing developments. Similarly, the VJP represented another veteran in obtaining benefits from the Social Security Administration after that agency denied his disability claim. After a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge, the veteran was granted approximately \$800 a month in social security benefits and \$15,000 in back benefits. And in yet another case the VJP sued the City's Department of Consumer Affairs for denying vendor's licenses to veterans with service-connected mental disabilities.

Besides coordinating public events on Patriots', Veterans, and Memorial Days, a City Department of Veteran Affairs can advise and assist veterans and their dependents in availing themselves of Federal and/or State benefits for which they may be eligible. Moreover, a Department of Veteran Affairs will also act as a watch dog to ensure that other city agencies aren't denying veterans the rights and benefits they are entitled to under the law and also be a liaison for veterans amongst the city's many agencies.

In the last couple of years, several public agencies and nonprofit organizations have started a ground breaking initiative to coordinate and deliver services, resources and care to New York City veterans and their families. With a Department of Veteran Affairs the City will be a full partner in this effort.

Thank you,

M. Audrey Carr, Esq.  
Director of Special Programs  
Legal Services NYC  
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**TESTIMONY OF  
ANNE TRENKLE  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
NEW YORK CITY HELMETS TO HARDHATS  
COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
COMMITTEE TO AMEND THE NEW YORK CITY CHARTER AND THE  
ADMINISTRATIVE CODE OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK, IN RELATION TO THE  
ESTABLISHMENT OF A DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS, AND  
REPEALING SECTION 14 OF CHAPTER ONE OF THE NEW YORK CITY CHARTER  
AND SUBCHAPTER 3 OF CHAPTER ONE OF TITLE 3 OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE  
CODE OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
HEARING ON INT.314  
SEPTEMBER 29, 2014 at 1 PM**

Good morning Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. My name is Anne Trenkle. I am the Executive Director of New York City Helmets to Hardhats, an organization which assists transitioning Veterans as well as members of the Reserve or National Guard to gain employment with the New York City construction trades and employers. We are here this afternoon to testify on this bill intended to establish a Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Int. 314 has the support of the New York City Helmets to Hardhats Program. This bill would, respectively, (1) establish a Department of Veterans' Affairs to service active duty members of the Armed Forces, (2) establish a Veterans' Advisory Board populated by Veterans to serve Veterans, and (3) provide a single comprehensive Department to inform and connect members of the Armed Forces with the resources they need.

The Council has worked with New York City Helmets to Hardhats to assure that this bill will promote better service to our members of the Armed Forces as well as identifying and funding programs that will actively service Veterans. We commend these efforts.

Among the issues addressed in our comments are that Int. 314 states that a Department of a Veterans Affairs will be established. We support the establishment of the Department as well as the Office of Commissioner. We believe the creation of this Office will be in the best interests for serving the multitude of needs of the Veteran community in a comprehensive manner.

Among the issues addressed in our comments are that Int. 314 will create a Veterans' Advisory Board containing nine members, all Veterans, representing the five boroughs of New York City. We would like to express our support for the designation of Veteran liaisons from each City Agency. Navigating Veteran services and employment opportunities on various websites, is currently an overwhelming task usually with dismal

results. We firmly believe having responsible individuals in such positions would streamline the information and application processes for Veterans under the umbrella of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

We remain committed to working with the Council and Administration on Int. 314. We expect that passage of this bill will streamline and increase the efficacy of programs and services available to Veterans in New York City. We look forward to continuing to work with this Committee and the Council and Administration on these critically important issues. Thank you.

Anne Trenkle  
Executive Director  
NYC Helmets to Hardhats, Inc.



## Veterans Affairs Committee Hearing

September 29, 2014

### Establishment of a Department of Veteran's Affairs

Chairman Ulrich and members of the Veterans Affairs Committee, on behalf of SAGE- Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders, I would like to thank you for holding this hearing on the Establishment of a Department of Veteran's Affairs. My name is Patrick Aitcheson, and I am Chief of Staff at SAGE as well as the proud husband of an LGBT veteran. SAGE is the country's oldest and largest organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBT older adults and has provided comprehensive social service and community-building programs, including the nation's first full-time LGBT Senior Center located in the Mid-town, for more than thirty years.

New York is home to approximately one million men and women who served their country in the Armed Forces. It is estimated that 37,757 gay and lesbian veterans live in NYS, and 17,000 live in NYC alone.<sup>i</sup> When ranked by the number and per capita rate of gay and lesbian veterans, NYS and NYC are among the top ten.

Across New York, more than 720,000 veterans are not receiving their health care benefits from the VA.<sup>ii</sup> This is partly because the Federal bureaucracy fails to reach out and let our vets know what services they are entitled to and partly because navigating the complex benefits system offered by the VA can be difficult for anyone. For LGBT vets, especially those who are currently over the age of 60, however, there are additional barriers and challenges – both to healthcare access within the VA system as well as to services to meet the needs created by the fact of military service at a time when discrimination against LGBT people was rampant and a matter of official government policy. SAGE believes that creating a Department of Veterans Affairs will help the City be better equipped to meet the full needs of its LGBT veterans.

Discrimination is at the root of many of the problems specific to gay and lesbian veterans. Service members who were forced to conceal their sexual orientation experienced and continue to experience negative mental health effects related to discrimination, as numerous studies have demonstrated. Despite these consequences, few resources are available for traumatized LGBT veterans.<sup>iii</sup> Further, VA research shows that the strain from being stigmatized and the target of bigoted hostility can produce higher rates of smoking, alcohol and drug abuse in LGBT vets, as well as a greater risk of anxiety and depression.<sup>iv</sup> Recent research indicates that only one-third of LGBT veterans openly communicate about their sexual orientation with VA healthcare providers, and one-quarter avoided seeking specific services because of perceived stigma. Transgender veterans are especially reluctant to seek healthcare, and many report negative experiences with healthcare institutions. 24% of transgender veterans report being refused

medical treatment for being transgender, and 43% say they have postponed or neglected to seek medical care when they were sick for fear of discrimination or maltreatment.<sup>v</sup>

In addition, many LGBT older vets left the military with a “less than honorable” discharge and with discharge paperwork that noted either that they were “homosexual” or that they were not fit for military service or both. A “less than honorable” discharge has lifelong consequences for a veteran, limiting the veteran’s access to the GI Bill and Veterans Administration healthcare. In addition, notations of “homosexuality” or lack of fitness for military service are a source of great stigma for many LGBT elder veterans. As a result of these discriminatory circumstances, many LGBT elder veterans have not accessed their federal VA and related benefits. Instead, many rely on state public assistance programs, shifting what should be a Federal expense to New York City and State. Other LGBT elder veterans go without essential income, medical and other support services, leading to impoverishment, over-reliance on emergency room visits and hospitalization for medical care, and homelessness.

Because SAGE provides New York City’s LGBT elder veterans with case management support, benefits advocacy, access to legal counsel through a partnership with Legal Services for New York City, and enhanced wrap-around services in order to improve their overall well-being, we recognize the value the proposed Department of Veterans Affairs could bring to those veterans most in need. We hope that the Veterans Affairs Committee and other members of the City Council will continue to support the LGBT older adults – including our veterans – in New York City who face severe challenges with income security and other basic quality of life issues as they age. Your support continues to be greatly valued and appreciated.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Patrick Aitcheson  
Chief of Staff  
SAGE

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<sup>i</sup> [http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411069\\_GayLesbianMilitary.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411069_GayLesbianMilitary.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> Gillibrand Report for Pro-Vets Legislation. <http://www.gillibrand.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/ProVets%20Report.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> See Moradi 2009 for a review: Bonnie Moradi. 2009. “Sexual Orientation Disclosure, Concealment, Harassment, and Military Cohesion: Perceptions of LGBT Military Veterans.” *Military Psychology* 21 (4): 513-533.

<sup>iv</sup> <http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/New-era-for-gay-veterans-as-milit...>

<sup>v</sup> Jaime M. Grant, Lisa A. Mottet, Justin Tanis, Jack Harrison, Jody L. Herman, and Mara Keisling. 2011. “Injustice At Every Turn: A Report Of The National Transgender Discrimination Survey.” Washington, D.C.: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.



Testimony of Loree Sutton, M.D., Brigadier General, U.S. Army, Retired

Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs

Before the New York City Council Committee on Veterans concerning

**Int. No. 314 - In relation to the establishment of a department of veterans' affairs, and repealing section 14 of chapter one of the New York city charter and subchapter 3 of chapter one of title 3 of the administrative code of the city of New York.**

1:00 p.m., Monday, September 29, 2014

Good morning Chairman Ulrich and the members of the Veterans Committee. My name is Loree Sutton and I am honored to serve as the Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you today and address Introduction Number 314 - In relation to the establishment of a department of veterans' affairs, and repealing section 14 of chapter one of the New York city charter and subchapter 3 of chapter one of title 3 of the administrative code of the city of New York.

Let me start out by sharing some of my background. Privileged to serve nearly 30 years in the United States Army, I was the Army's highest ranking psychiatrist from 2007 to 2010 and was the founding Director of the Defense Centers of Excellence for Mental Health and Traumatic Brain Injury. My military awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit and the Bronze Star. I have led change in complex organizations throughout my time in uniform and am a team-player, strategic thinker, problem-solver, innovator and advocate. Since retiring from active duty service in November 2010, I have worked with numerous organizations throughout the country and around the world to advance peer-to-peer training using self-regulation skills. My proudest achievement is working with Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and others on behalf of the all too many men and women who have endured the agony of workplace bullying, mobbing and military sexual trauma.

On August 18, 2014, Mayor Bill de Blasio appointed me as Commissioner to his Office of Veterans' Affairs. Since assuming the role of Commissioner earlier this month, I am in the midst of conducting a 90-day assessment of MOVA – examining its current role, mission, organization and functions to determine what actions are necessary to achieve the greatest positive impact for all New York City veterans and their loved ones. During this initial period, I am also listening to

and engaging the perspectives from a diverse range of stakeholders throughout the city, including leaders from City Hall, City Council, State and Federal agencies; private, academic, philanthropic, social non-profit sectors and most importantly, veterans and their families from throughout the five boroughs. Upon completing this assessment, I will propose strategic recommendations for the Mayor to consider as he formulates his vision with respect to Veterans' Affairs. The bedrock values underpinning this endeavor are honor, engagement, accountability, respect and teamwork.

The Mayor's commitment to our city's veterans is deeply personal and heartfelt. As he has stated, "It's a crucial time for new leadership for this office because the needs are great and more complicated than ever."

Chairman Ulrich, I want to close by thanking you for your leadership. I appreciate your tireless commitment to veterans and their families and applaud your penchant for meaningful action. Today's hearing promises to provide vital insights informing my 90-day assessment of MOVA.

Introduction 314 deserves all due consideration as we dedicate ourselves to the historic journey that lies ahead. After completing my assessment and sharing my findings with Mayor de Blasio, I look forward to following up with the New York City Council Committee on Veterans to discuss this important proposal in further detail. I share your sense of urgency; my team and I are currently overhauling the MOVA website to enhance its functions and access to relevant resources, including agency liaisons and job opportunities. Further, we are examining the contracting process to identify how to best maximize effectiveness and efficiency as well as exercise due diligence to ensure fairness and accountability. This is not business as usual. Together, we will move mountains.

Thank you for this opportunity to meet with you today and look forward to working with all of you on behalf of all NYC veterans and their loved ones. I welcome your comments and questions.

# ***The Veterans Mental Health Action Committee***

of the **Veterans Mental Health Coalition of NYC**

Int. No. 314 –

In Relation to the Establishment of a Department of Veterans' Affairs, and Repealing  
Section 14 of Chapter One of the New York City Charter and Subchapter 3 of Chapter  
One of Title 3 of the Administrative Code of the City Of New York

The NYC Council Committee on Veterans  
Honorable Eric Ulrich, Chair

Testimony by Kimberly Williams, LMSW  
Vice President, Integrated Policy and Program Solutions  
MHA of NYC

September 29, 2014

***The Veterans Mental Health Action Committee***  
**The Veterans Mental Health Coalition of NYC**  
50 Broadway, 19<sup>th</sup> Floor, New York, NY 10004  
(212) 614-5753 | [center@mhaofnyc.org](mailto:center@mhaofnyc.org) | f: (212) 785-1910

Good afternoon Chair Ulrich and members of the Committee. Thank you for your leadership in addressing the needs of NYC's veterans and for organizing this important hearing on elevating the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs to Departmental Level. My name is Kimberly Williams, and I am the Vice President for Integrated Policy and Program Solutions at the Mental Health Association of New York City (MHA-NYC). I am speaking today on behalf of the Veterans Mental Action Committee of the Veterans Mental Health Coalition (VMHC) of New York City. The Coalition, which has a diverse cross membership of over 1,000 stakeholders and was co-founded by MHA-NYC and NAMI-NYC Metro, promotes the mental health and well-being of New York City service members, veterans, and their families through education, information, collaboration, and promotion of a comprehensive array of services. The Veterans' Mental Health Action Committee was established as a subcommittee to promote needed policy reforms at the local and state levels.

Over 225,000 military veterans, most of who have served in previous generations, are residents of New York City. As more servicemembers transition back to civilian life, this number will increase by the thousands and will require additional resources in both dollars and staffing to meet both the current and growing need.

A range of coordinated services, from all levels of government, the private sector, and local community based providers is required for veterans and their families to successfully transition home and thrive throughout their lives. In New York City, MOVA is the lead government body addressing veterans needs including advising the Mayor on issues impacting veterans and coordinating with other veteran serving organizations and key stakeholders to support the city's veteran community. While MOVA has a vital leadership role in confronting

## The Veterans Mental Health Action Committee of New York City

the needs of the city's veterans, it has lacked the funding, resources, and staffing to fully operationalize its mission.

In order for NYC to fully support and commit to addressing the needs of all veterans, it must do more. That is why the Veterans Mental Health Action Committee lends its support for the recent proposed city legislation (Section 2, Chapter 75) that calls for MOVA to be elevated to the level of NYC Department of Veteran Affairs. With a Department dedicated to serving veterans, greater resources and funding can be secured to better overcome the complex and diverse needs of veterans from all generations, backgrounds, and experiences. Similar to the role of other local departments, the Veterans Department could be responsible for veterans' services in NYC, overseeing funding for services and supports, contracting with local providers to deliver services, ensuring quality care, and engaging in sound planning on behalf of the veterans' community.

Furthermore, NYC government leadership representing veterans, whether MOVA or a Department, would do well to raise the profile of NYC's veterans. This includes increasing awareness about their challenges, needs, as well as strengths and skills to the general public, fellow government partners, and the private sector so that necessary resources and supports can be mounted, effectively coordinated, and sustained.

Most importantly, whether the leadership lies within a Mayor's Office or a local Department, the city's veterans and their unique needs deserve greater attention, planning and most of all, funding. With all the resources we have in this great city, we can and we must do better to meet the challenges of our fellow citizens who have sacrificed so selflessly, and often at great cost, on our behalf.

The Veterans Mental Health Action Committee of New York City

We believe this is a significant time of transition for MOVA. With new leadership at MOVA and in all branches of government, there is renewed opportunity for NYC to make good on its commitment to the city's veterans community.

We thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your consideration of how to maximize and elevate this important office. Please reach out to us for background information on the needs of NYC veterans and for ways to best improve access to and quality of care for veterans with behavioral health challenges and their families.

Rob Cuthbert, Urban Justice Center-Veteran Advocacy Project  
City Council Testimony  
September 29, 2014

Good afternoon Chairman Ulrich and members of the Veterans Committee. My name is Rob Cuthbert and I manage the Discharge Upgrade Clinic of the Veteran Advocacy Project at the Urban Justice Center. Our director, Coco Culhane, was invited to speak today but is unfortunately out of town so I am speaking on our project's behalf. Since the end of the Revolutionary War, veterans have been a permanent feature of New York City. Yet, it was not until 1987—13 years after the end of the Vietnam War—that local law 53 created the Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs. Now, fourteen years after 9/11, the Veteran Advocacy Project supports the creation of a New York City Department of Veterans' Affairs. The department would be a valuable resource to support the approximately 237,000 veterans living in New York City, and the thousands that will join them in the future.<sup>1</sup>

However, the proposed law allows for dramatic change, but does not ensure it. The City Council must ensure a Department of Veterans' Affairs for our city that is more robust and has the potential to affect dramatic and positive change for New York City's veterans. New York City must have an agency for veterans that leads: a department that organizes and focuses veterans' services. Unfortunately, the proposed law does not provide enough detail on the duties of a new Department. Without a clear mission, the department could do little to improve the lives of New York City's veterans.

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<sup>1</sup> Office of Senator Kristen Gillibrand. New Gillibrand Report; Unemployment Among New Veterans Nearly 15 Percent, Over 7 Percent for All Veterans in NY [Press Release]. Retrieved from <http://www.gillibrand.senate.gov/download/new-york-veterans-unemployment-report>  
Note: Numbers appear to be from 2009.

Rob Cuthbert, Urban Justice Center-Veteran Advocacy Project  
City Council Testimony  
September 29, 2014

New York City's veterans' services suffer from a lack of focus and collaboration. In some areas, such as behavioral health, housing, and military discharge upgrades, there is a critical need for services. Many of the city's programs limit which veterans can receive assistance. The Veteran Advocacy Project believes this department should have the mission of supporting every veteran, regardless of active or reserve status, service era, disability, or characterization of discharge.

A Department of Veterans' Affairs should continue MOVA's attention to employment, but the proposed department must organize around four other pillars as well: Health; Legal Services; Housing; and Education.

1) **Health:** The New York City Department of Veterans' Affairs must ensure that every veteran is connected to VA or other health care that heals the wounds of war. Currently, not every veteran is entitled to VA care. For example, some New York members of the National Guard, do not meet the VA's service requirements for care, and, statutorily, are not even considered veterans by the VA. Other veterans received administrative discharges for minor offenses that they committed while suffering from Post Traumatic Stress, Traumatic Brain Injury, or from the effects of military rape and sexual assault, and then do not qualify for VA medical care. The New York City Department of Veterans' Affairs should help organize pathways to healthcare—inside or outside the VA—for every veteran who needs it; with an exigent focus on veterans who are suicidal and seeking counseling or services.

Rob Cuthbert, Urban Justice Center-Veteran Advocacy Project  
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2) **Legal Services:** The New York City Department of Veterans' Affairs must connect veterans with legal services that can help them navigate the veteran-specific legal structures that often require representation for success. Attorneys can remove barriers to employment, secure housing, and more. Disability claims before the VA and discharge upgrades before the Department of Defense are the areas that require skilled advocates with special training. There are also veterans who need veteran-specific counsel in housing cases, criminal cases, and in public benefits hearings. Too few of our city's providers know how the VA benefits system interacts with other government entitlements and almost none know how the military discharge upgrade system works. As a result of deficient applications and insufficient advocacy, New York City's veterans lose access to thousands—if not millions—of federal dollars to which they are entitled.

3) **Housing:** The New York City Department of Veterans' Affairs must commit to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs' current goal of ending homelessness among veterans by the end of 2015. The expanded HUD-VASH Program provides housing solutions for many New York veterans. However, in veterans' supportive housing, far too often we find caseworkers who are overworked and untrained, which puts veterans in a cycle of eviction and homelessness. The department should examine the conditions of facilities that receive funding through the city—some of which are barely a step above shelter. The department should review veterans' supportive housing programs through an annual report and have the ability to affect change where veterans are not being housed properly. The New York City Department of Veterans' Affairs must

Rob Cuthbert, Urban Justice Center-Veteran Advocacy Project  
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help connect veterans to better housing and advocate for policies that make veterans a priority in all types of housing developments.

4) **Education:** The New York City Department of Veterans' Affairs must provide veterans with two kinds of educational guidance. First, it must guide veterans toward concrete pathways to a vocational skill or enrollment in the CUNY or SUNY systems. Veterans must be connected with proven, non-predatory education systems. Second, it must connect veterans with resources to address the most common barriers to education. Student veterans face too many challenges that may cause destabilization and ultimately force them to sacrifice education for survival: VA benefits adjudication, family law issues, housing issues, military discharge upgrades, and more can derail veterans at a crucial time in their lives. At these critical junctures, student veterans need to be guided toward legal and health support.

In addition to organizing around these four pillars, the law should mandate that the annual report provided by the Veterans' Advisory Board should meet specific content requirements and answer certain questions, such as, "According to the Veterans' Advisory Board, what is the state of New York City's veteran population?" As is, the annual reports of the Veterans' Advisory Board are, in actuality, only minutes of the meetings that provide little to no policy guidance to the public, veterans advocacy groups or New York City's government.

Rob Cuthbert, Urban Justice Center-Veteran Advocacy Project  
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New York City must have a Department of Veterans' Affairs, but the mission of this department must be to organize and focus services across New York City that address not only employment, but health, legal services, housing and education. The proposed law allows for dramatic change, but does not ensure it. The City Council must pass a law that creates a Department of Veterans' Affairs for our city that is more robust and has the potential to affect dramatic and positive change for New York City's veterans. Although employment is a vital area of focus, health; legal services; housing; and education should be specifically cited in the law that will create New York City's Department of Veterans' Affairs. In time, our department should seize the opportunity to set a national example for the best care and reintegration of our veterans.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

**NYC Veterans Advisory Board  
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917-731-2467  
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**STATEMENT OF VINCENT M. MCGOWAN  
CHAIRMAN, VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD**

**BEFORE**

**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS**

**250 BROADWAY – 16<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK**

**September 29, 2014**

My name is Vincent McGowan and I am the Chairman of the city's Veterans Advisory Board (VAB). The VAB was chartered in 1987 under Local Law 53 to advise the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs (MOVA) on all matters concerning veterans. In 2002, Local Law 45 expanded the VAB from five to nine members: five appointed by the Mayor and four appointed by the City Council, with each Borough represented on the board. In 2006, Intro 233 enhanced the structure of the VAB and added annual reporting requirements. The first Chairman of the VAB was elected in 2008.

First, I would like to express the VAB's appreciation to the Committee on Veterans for giving us the opportunity to comment upon Intro 314.

Over the years, the VAB has worked closely with the Mayor's Office and the City Council on a myriad of issues affecting today's veterans. It is hoped that by now, the old days of thinking that veterans are strictly a federal issue are over. Veterans also need local programs, and the revenues that can be realized by the city through veteran business initiatives and increased numbers of successful VA claims are hopefully a no-brainer at this point.

However, the VAB is cautious with Intro 314, because of the current transition with a new Commissioner at MOVA, the temporary placement of MOVA's offices and the implications of this unfunded mandate during a delicate fiscal time. We believe that MOVA is already underfunded, and the fact that three trained veteran's claims counselors were recently not included in the budget and lost last month only adds to our concerns. Where will these funds to create an entire agency come from?

What kind of changes and/or interruption in current MOVA services would occur if this legislation is passed?

Why is there no inclusion of Reservists and National Guard who have been activated to serve in the military in the definitions contained in Section 3101? Here, the VAB recommends adopting the State definition of a veteran for continuity.

Further, we would recommend that new State OGS programs for Disabled Veteran Business Enterprises also be included in Section 31-302.

Finally, the VAB recommends further study and revision of this legislation, perhaps through a subcommittee which would also include members of the Committee on Small Business.

In closing, the VAB looks forward to further City Council review of Intro 314, and the ramifications it would present to our veterans and to the City of New York. Thank you.



## VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

Queens County Council INC, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S., 124-11 109<sup>th</sup> Avenue, South Ozone Park, NY 11420

September 29, 2014

As we close another chapter on the Global War on Terror with the impending draw-down of major operations in Afghanistan by the end of 2014, it is highly important that we take care of our Warriors whom have served honorably and without question, when the call to action has been made. Not only have we provided our warfighters with the tools necessary to forge successful military campaigns past and present, but we must equally take the responsibility in continuing to provide the resources necessary when our service members make the transition back to civilian life.

As a Veteran and advocate, it has not only been clear to me but also recognizable among my peers within the Veterans community, that the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs has been lacking the tools which are necessary for the over 200,000 Veterans residing within the City of New York. This is not an issue of mismanagement from previous leadership, but an issue of a lacking in resources. Furthermore, the need for services will only increase over the next couple of years as service members currently serving, come home in exponential numbers.

With the Introduction of Bill 0314-2014, which states the dissolution of MOVA, and the creation of the Department of Veterans Affairs, will give the necessary tools to achieve its mission. Not only will this new Department be given the tools to work more effectively, but it will streamline the process of providing the services needed in supporting our Veterans with the necessary funding to accomplish its mission. For way too long, the Veterans of the City have been underfunded. This is not a statement of blame, but a statement of warning, as we have seen from previous generations, the Veterans whom have fallen through the cracks. We simply cannot afford to let that happen, as our Veterans are vital to our communities as they bring back many years of valuable experience earned on the battlefield.

In closing, on behalf of the 3,000 members of the Queens County Council VFW, I would like to thank New York City Councilmember Eric Ulrich, as well as all the council members of the Veterans Committee for bringing such a tremendous Bill to the floors of the City Council. It is with high hopes that all Council Members throughout the five boroughs as well as the Mayor strongly consider that with a move to a newly formed Department, that all Veterans within the city limits will have a stronger and fully transparent Veterans Administration, capable of guiding our Veterans in the right direction.

Sincerely,

Ryan S. Graham  
Commander  
Queens County Council  
Veterans of Foreign Wars

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 314 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joseph Gachan

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: VVA #126

Address: 59-45 56 Ave, Maspeth, N.Y.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 314 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/28/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Linda Crowler

Address: 3120 Wilkin St. AM. #4K

I represent: MFSO - Military Families Speak Out

Address: MFSO. strg.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 314 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/29/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: FRANK J FAZZIO

Address: 59-40 64th St Maspeth, NY 11378

I represent: The American Legion

Address: Same Above

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: AUDREY CARR

Address: 237A ALEXANDER 40 WORTH ST

I represent: LEGAL SERVICES NYC NY, NY

Address: 40 WORTH ST #606 NEW YORK, NY 10013

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/29/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: PATRICK GUALTIERI

Address: 346 BROADWAY

I represent: VINCE McGOWAN (CHAIR VAB)

Address: 346 BROADWAY

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 29 Sep 14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: FANG A. WONG

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: THE AMERICAN LEGION

Address: NY COUNTRY

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/29/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Robert Peter Cutlbert, Jr.

Address: 65 Central Park West Apt. 1E, NY, NY 10023

I represent: Urban Justice Center - Veteran Advocacy Project

Address: 123 William St. 16<sup>th</sup> Floor, NY, NY 10038

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 314 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/29/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Anne Trenkle

Address: 71 West 23<sup>rd</sup> St - Suite 501 NYC 10010

I represent: New York City Helmets to Hardhats

Address: 71 West 23<sup>rd</sup> St - Suite 501 NYC 10010

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition N/A

Date: 29 SEP 2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: LORES SUTTON

Address: 346 BROADWAY, 3E NY, NY

I represent: MOVA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 314 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/29/2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: PAUL SCHOTTENHAMER

Address: 78-56 83 ST GLENDALE, NY 11385

I represent: AMERICAN LEGION - QUEENS COUNTY

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/29/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Patrick Archibald

Address: 309 Seventh Ave. 15th Fl. NY NY 10001

I represent: SAGE

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/29/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kim Williams

Address: 50 Broadway

I represent: Veterans Mental Health Action Committee

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms