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Title: Resolution calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign the Veterans Cemetery Bill (A.1386A/S.5381A), legislation that would provide for the establishment of a State veterans cemetery in New York.

Sponsors: Ruben Wills, Fernando Cabrera, Inez E. Dickens, Daniel Dromm, Mathieu Eugene, Julissa Ferreras-Copeland, Lewis A. Fidler, Vincent J. Gentile, Letitia James, G. Oliver Koppell, Stephen T. Levin, Melissa Mark-Viverito, Annabel Palma, Deborah L. Rose, Jumaane D. Williams, Joel Rivera, Ydanis A. Rodriguez, Eric A. Ulrich

Indexes:

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Res. No. 1268

Resolution calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign the Veterans Cemetery Bill (A.1386A/S.5381A), legislation that would provide for the establishment of a State veterans cemetery in New York.

By Council Members Wills, Cabrera, Dickens, Dromm, Eugene, Ferreras, Fidler, Gentile, James, Koppell, Levin, Mark-Viverito, Palma, Rose, Williams, Rivera, Rodriguez and Ulrich

Whereas, The New York State Veterans Cemetery Bill A.8320/S.5720, legislation introduced by New York State Senators Greg Ball and Bill Larkin and New York Assembly Member Felix Ortiz, would allow the State of New York to authorize the State Division of Veteran’s Affairs to establish, maintain, and care for a State veterans cemetery; and

Whereas, Veterans in New York should be recognized for their commitment and sacrifice through the provision of a final resting place in their home state to honor their service; and

Whereas, The 2009 American Community Survey reported that 21.9 million veterans live in the United

States; and

Whereas, According to a 2009 report by New York State Senator Kirsten Gillibrand regarding unemployment among veterans, New York is home to over one million veterans, of which 237,302 live in New York City; and

Whereas, The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' ("VA") system of national cemeteries was established to honor U.S. veterans with final resting places that serve as lasting tributes to commemorate their service and sacrifice to our nation; and

Whereas, Recognizing the growing need for gravesites and the limitations of the VA National Cemetery Administration, which maintains 131 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico, the VA established a Veterans Cemetery Grants Program ("the Program") to assist states, territories, and federally recognized tribal governments in providing gravesites for veterans in those areas where the 131 national cemeteries cannot fully satisfy their burial needs; and

Whereas, Public Law 105-368, which established the Program and became effective in 1999, authorized the VA to provide up to 100 percent of the development cost for an approved project and can now provide for operating equipment for the establishment of new cemeteries; and

Whereas, The VA aims to provide the service of a veterans cemetery within 75 miles of 90 percent of the veterans across the country; and

Whereas, New York comprises 54,556 square miles and has seven national veterans cemeteries, two of which are closed to interments and two of which are limited to cremated remains unless someone is buried in the same gravesite of a previously interred family member; and

Whereas, To date, the Veterans Cemetery Grants Program has awarded grants totaling more than \$438 million to help establish, expand, or improve 84 veterans cemeteries in 41 states and territories, which provided more than 29,000 burials in 2011 alone; and

Whereas, New York has never participated in this federally sponsored program, leaving New York City

veterans without access to this earned benefit; and

Whereas, Providing a mechanism for the establishment of a State veterans cemetery would constitute a necessary and prudent step toward increasing the availability and accessibility of this earned benefit to veterans in New York State, including those in New York City; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign the Veterans Cemetery Bill (A.1386A/S.5381A), legislation that would provide for the establishment of a State veterans cemetery in New York.

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