

***Once-Homeless Vet and Labor Leaders Join Israel, King in Announcing Bill to Increase Resources for Veterans***

Hicksville, NY—On the Friday after Tax Day, U.S. Representatives Steve Israel (D-NY) and Peter King (R-NY) announced new federal legislation to increase resources for homeless veterans by allowing tax filers to redirect up to three dollars of their federal taxes to a homeless veterans fund. In the United States, there are an estimated 154,000 veterans who are homeless and twice as many veterans that have experienced homelessness at some point. 26% of all homeless Americans are veterans.

“The federal government has a fundamental, ‘buck-stops-here’ obligation to leave no veteran homeless,” said Congressman Israel, a Member of the House Appropriations Committee that helped pass the largest increase to veterans’ health care in the 77-year history of the Veterans Administration. “There can be no higher priority than ending the homelessness of veterans in America. There can be no greater shame if we fail. That’s why I’m proud to introduce this legislation which will allow all Americans to join in our fight to eradicate homelessness among veterans. This truly is a national imperative.”

“We cannot allow our heroes who have liberated continents and help spread democracy to be homeless,” said Congressman King. “We must do more and this legislation is an important step in that direction. I am proud to be associated with this effort.”

The proposal emerged from talks the Congressmen had with Long Island labor leaders regarding their work to end homelessness among veterans. Recently Israel announced assistance he secured for Joe Soukup, a once-homeless veteran that struggled to receive disability benefits from the Veterans Administration. Israel and King were joined by Long Island veterans and union leaders, including James Castellane, the President of the Building & Construction Trades Council of Nassau-Suffolk and Dick O’Kane, Business Manager of Iron Workers Local 361.

Israel and King were joined by Long Island veteran John Perrin, who now lives in supportive housing after suffering with several bouts of homelessness and other effects of his diagnosis. John served active duty from 1970 to 1972 and again from 1974 to 1979 with the U.S. Army. Upon returning from Vietnam, Perrin suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), drug addiction and periods of homelessness. After a stay in the Salvation Army shelter in Northport, he contacted Congressman Israel for assistance in receiving Social Security Disability (SSD) benefits and retroactive benefits for service-connected injuries.

The legislation introduced by Israel and King (H.R. 5823) creates a section on annual tax return forms that would allow taxpayers to designate three dollars of their income tax payment to programs to assist homeless veterans. The designation would not increase the taxpayers’ tax liability and is similar to the Presidential Campaign Fund, in which a taxpayer can check a box to redirect a portion of their tax liability to the public financing fund for Presidential elections. The legislation creates a Homeless Veterans Assistance Fund where the money would

## **U.S. Reps. Steve Israel and Peter King Announce Legislation Aiding Homeless Veterans**

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automatically be deposited and expenditures from the fund would have to be appropriated by Congress and could only be used for the purpose of providing assistance to homeless veterans. Congressman Tim Bishop (D-NY) cosponsored the legislation with Israel and King.