

***Under current law, only spouses or children can be buried at National Cemeteries, new legislation would amend the code so a parent can be buried alongside their child***

Brentwood, NY— Friday, U.S. Rep. Steve Israel (D-Long Island) was joined by Dorine Kenney, the mother of Army Pfc. Jacob S. Fletcher who died in an IED explosion in Iraq in 2003, to announce new legislation that would allow a parent to be buried alongside their son or daughter at National Cemeteries. Under the current rule, only spouses and children are guaranteed burial with service members.

“When Dorine came to me and explained the walls she'd come up against when trying to ensure she could be laid to rest with her son, I knew Congress needed to act. Allowing the parents of a service members to be buried alongside their son or daughter is the least we can do for the families who made the ultimate sacrifice,” Rep. Israel said. “Let’s give these families some peace of mind and show them the respect they deserve.”

“I’m very happy that this bill is being introduced. It will give ‘Gold Star’ parents the same rights as non-military parents, and that is the right to be buried with our loved ones,” Dorine Kenney said.

Kenney has requested to be laid to rest alongside her son at the Long Island National Cemetery in Farmingdale and applied for a waiver, yet was told no decision would be made prior to her death.

Currently, burial in national cemeteries is available for eligible veterans, their spouses and dependants at no cost and including burial benefits and perpetual care as part of a national shrine. A family member who is not a spouse or dependent can put in a request for a waiver, as Kenney has done, but many times the decision is not made until the time of death.

The new legislation will authorize the burial of a parent when there is no eligible spouse or child. It will also allow the parent to know their wishes will be honored ahead of time.

Some cemeteries allow the soldier one grave and others allow side by side graves for the veteran and a family member. This language will not change that. It allows the parent to be buried with their dependent if there is no spouse or child. The space used is the empty space that has already been set aside.

Israel serves on the House Appropriations Committee, and previously served on the House Armed Services Committee. Dorine Kenney is the founder of the Jacob’s Light Foundation, which sends care packages to soldiers abroad.