

Hauppauge, NY—On Friday, Congressman Steve Israel (D-Huntington) presented three Long Island veterans with military medals they earned in combat decades ago but had not yet received. Israel has secured numerous overdue medals and awards for veterans and over \$2.6 million in retroactive benefits for veterans since taking office in 2001. He recently worked with his colleagues on the House Appropriations Committee to pass the single largest increase to veterans health care in the Veterans Administration's 77-year history.

“Veterans and reservists have fought valiantly to defend our country, but all too often come home to red tape and long waits for the services and benefits they were promised,” said Congressman Israel. “I’m honored to have cut through the red tape to ensure that veterans that fought bravely for awards receive the recognition they deserve.”

Congressman Israel was joined by Huntington Vietnam Veteran Michael Vassallo, East Northport Korean War veteran Roy King, Huntington Station WWII veteran William Massa and their families for the medal presentation on Friday in his district office.

Israel awarded a Purple Heart to Vasallo, a veteran of the Marines stationed in Vietnam from 1965-68. Despite the injuries he sustained to both of his knees in battle in 1968, Michael had previously been denied twice for the medal for insufficient evidence. Vasallo began working with Israel in May 2004 to obtain this medal. King, a Korean War Army veteran, was awarded on Friday with the National Defense Medal, Korean Service Medal (with 3 bronze service stars), Good Conduct Medal, and the United Nations Service Medal. Israel also assisted WWII Navy veteran Massa in obtaining replacement medals for the WWII Victory Medal and the American Campaign Medal. In the past, Israel helped Massa secure 7 other ribbons and medals.

Earlier this month, Congressman Israel joined over a dozen local agencies and nonprofits to host a veterans and reservists workshop at the Northport Veterans Administration Hospital. Veterans and reservists attending the workshop received information on services available at the VA and experts were on hand to assist returning reservists and veterans with issues relating to employment, health care and disabilities.