

To: The New York City, City Council Committee on Veterans

May 3, 2013

Submitted by the Military Families Speak Out Metro Chapter

Honorable Sirs and Ladies:

MFSO Metro Chapter NYC supports A514/S3872 legislation to Amend the Real Property Tax Law to allow Veterans to enjoy the Veterans Property Tax Exemption; to provide stability as they rebuild their lives after the horrors of war. Housing and shelter have been attested to by experts in veterans affairs as the primary factor in turning around and stabilizing the veteran population, because once you know where they are, you can create a nexus of services to deal with other problems like jobs, and assimilate veterans back into civilian life. A homeless expert once said it is hard to get a job without an address, and without a place to take a bath.

In Los Angeles, there are 400 acres of government property that were gifted in 1888 for the express purpose of providing housing to veterans, where nothing has been built. New Yorkers and to the extent possible, the New York City Council should show that New York works a little faster to care for its veteran population. Los Angeles has about 8,000 homeless veterans per night.

The Hudson Valley VA Healthcare System Shelter provides private rooms for recuperating or at risk homeless veterans. There are several housing units, in the Bronx and other parts of New York, that provide veterans with preferential housing, including the Mitchell Lama amendment for NY State. More facilities for female veterans with children need to be constructed. It is less expensive and morally consistent to provide housing for veterans and their families than to end up filling jail cells or drug treatment facilities, or digging graves for those veterans who choose suicide. In order to get veterans into housing and shelters the present outreach program will have to expand and coordinate to involve community centers, One Stop, crisis intervention teams in the five boroughs, the NYC Health and Hospitals Department, social workers in ERs, the Police Department, and utilizing those liaison personnel appointed by the Mayor, and MOVA. **A state of emergency may have to be declared to intervene in this heartbreaking epidemic of homelessness and suicide which is a national scandal.** The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have less than 50% support among service members, according surveys of the *Army Times*. The sooner the war in Afghanistan ends--and we implore the present government administration to **Bring the Troops Home Now**--the fewer suicides, the less homeless shelters, the less domestic violence, drug addition, deaths, wounds and dismemberment will occur. To us, this is not just morality, it is life and death. For example, we have one mother whose son is on his 6th deployment, another soldier who deploys this fall; we think Pres. Karzai has a sufficient fortune and if groups within Afghanistan want civil war, they will do it whether we withdraw now or in 2014.

MFSO Metro thanks Chair Eugene, Veterans Committee Members Sanders, Fidler, Gentile, Cabrera, Dromm, and Greenfield, and Mr. Recchia, Speaker Quinn, Mr. Lanza and the other members of the NYC City Council and NYS Legislature for their compassionate and patriotic concern: some have written laws, amendments and set up veterans' courts, taking a determined and responsible stance to get a grip on the needs of veterans, soldiers and military families. We need a strong military, and the armed forces must change its public image and deliver the care veterans, soldiers and military families need for young people to want to be a part of it.

Respectfully submitted,

Lionelle Hamanaka for Metro MFSO

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 1735

in favor in opposition

Date: May 3

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lionelle Hamanaka

Address: 66 W 94 St

I represent: Military Families Speak Out

Address: mfso.org

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