



**Testimony Submitted to the New York City Council
Committee on Veterans**

Serving Post-9/11 Veterans Oversight Hearing

**Submitted by:
Yesenia Mata
Commissioner
NYC Department of Veterans' Services**

April 23, 2026

Good Morning Chair Morano and members of the Committee on Veterans,

My name is Yesenia Mata, and I am the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Veterans' Services. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the needs of post-9/11 Veterans and the City's efforts to serve this generation. You may notice that my team and I are wearing red today to remember and honor those who are currently deployed.

This work is deeply personal to me. I still serve in uniform as a Captain in the United States Army Reserve, and I have the privilege of leading an agency shaped in no small part by fellow post-9/11 Veterans who are committed every day to making New York City a better place for those who have served.

Post-9/11 Veterans now represent a significant share of the Veteran community nationally, comprising roughly 28 percent of the total Veteran population. Here in New York City, our data reflects a comparable presence. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 28,555 Veterans in New York City, or about 23 percent of the city's Veteran population, served in the post-9/11 era. The highest concentrations of these Veterans are in Queens, followed by Brooklyn.

Here in New York City, they are among our most diverse and highly educated Veterans, bringing valuable skills and leadership to our communities. Looking at education alone, there are over 6,000 students and dependents using their Post 9/11 GI Bill education benefits across the five boroughs.

Data at both the national and local level shows that post-9/11 Veterans are often earlier in their civilian journeys, as many separate from service after their initial enlistment or shortly



thereafter. While service lengths vary, a significant portion serve between roughly five and ten years, meaning many are transitioning into the workforce, pursuing higher education, or exploring entrepreneurship at a critical stage in their lives.

At the same time, research shows this cohort experiences higher levels of psychological distress and is more likely to face substance use challenges. Studies from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs indicate that post-9/11 Veterans have elevated rates of conditions such as PTSD and depression. National data also shows that approximately 1 in 10 Veterans who access VA care are diagnosed with a substance use disorder, with higher risk among younger Veterans and those with recent service.

Taken together, these realities underscore the need for thoughtful, targeted, and holistic approaches to support post-9/11 Veterans as they navigate both immediate transitions and long-term stability.

At the Department of Veterans' Services, we are working intentionally to ensure our outreach strategies and services are responsive to these evolving needs.

Mental health remains a critical priority. Through our coordination with the New York State Joseph P. Dwyer Program, we support peer-to-peer engagement models that reduce isolation, build community, and encourage health-seeking behaviors. Through our most recent Dwyer program cycle, we supported 31 community-based organizations across the five boroughs, reaching as many as 510 participants in a single month. These outcomes reinforce that peer-based models are an effective and culturally competent way to connect Veterans to care.

At the same time, our work shows that the needs of post-9/11 Veterans extend beyond the individual and deeply affect families and children. Supporting the full Veteran household must remain a priority. For this generation, service has often been a family experience. Spouses, caregivers, and children have navigated repeated deployments, long separations, and reintegration alongside them. In fact, research from Brown University shows that half of all Post 9/11 Service members have deployed more than once.

In New York City, these families face real pressures—particularly around housing affordability, childcare, and employment stability. Military spouses often experience career disruption, making access to workforce opportunities, education, and benefits critical to the stability of the entire household. We must also continue to support our Gold



Star families from the post-9/11 generation, ensuring they have access to mental health support, community, and sustained engagement.

Our service data further reinforces these needs. This fiscal year, the majority of cases coming through our VetConnect platform have been concentrated in Housing Assistance, Veteran Benefits and Claims navigation and economic mobility. We also continue to see consistent demand for Legal Assistance, Food Assistance, and Education services. Taken together, this underscores that economic stability remains a central challenge for Veterans and their families, and that these issues are often deeply interconnected.

I also want to emphasize that, as a new Commissioner, I take seriously how we think about and use data. I know that much of the data we will discuss today precedes my tenure, but moving forward, I am focused on strengthening how data at DVS is captured, analyzed, and reported moving forward. Our team is working to ensure that our metrics reflect both community need and the full scope of the work being done. We are examining the systems we use to make referrals, track outcomes, and measure impact, and improving them where necessary. When it comes to understanding what is happening in the community, no stone should be left unturned. Our response must be informed by accurate, credible data.

Recently, we achieved the most successful month of Veteran housing placements in the agency's history, placing 28 Veterans and families into permanent housing. It reflects what's possible when the right systems are in place, teams are supported, and how that impact extends beyond individual Veterans to strengthen the broader community.

We also recognize that engagement requires visibility and trust. Since stepping into this role, I have convened long overdue roundtables on key issues, including women Veterans and post-9/11 Veterans, with more to come. Our outreach strategy continues to evolve to meet Veterans where they are: on campuses, in workplaces, at community events, and across digital platforms. We are also working to address the ongoing challenge of self-identification by making our services more accessible, relevant, and responsive. We do not want the burden to fall on the Veteran to find us; we are committed to finding them. And we are eager to work with fellow Commissioners and City agencies to ensure that Local Law 37 is fully implemented, so that Veterans who come into contact with City services are connected to our agency for support.



I want to be clear: regardless of when a Veteran served, every individual who walks through our doors will be treated with the highest level of respect and dignity.

We are grateful for the Committee's continued partnership and attention to this important work. We look forward to working together to ensure that all Veterans, including those who have served in the post-9/11 era, have access to the opportunities and support they deserve.

Thank you, and I am happy to answer any questions.



NEW YORK HEALTH FOUNDATION: *Improving the state of New York's health*

Testimony of Camille Okonkwo
Policy and Research Associate
New York Health Foundation

Submitted to the New York City Council Committee on Veterans
Oversight – Serving Post-9/11 Veterans
April 23, 2026

Thank you, Chairperson Morano, and members of the Committees, for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the New York Health Foundation (NYHealth). NYHealth is a private, independent, statewide foundation dedicated to improving the health of all New Yorkers, including the approximately 120,000 veterans who call New York City home.

For over 15 years, NYHealth has worked to understand and support the health needs of New York's veterans. We do this through grantmaking, policy analysis, advocacy, research, and convenings. Our work has identified service gaps and helped develop innovative community-based programs that meet veterans where they are. Over the years, we have had the opportunity to partner closely with City agencies and partners to ensure New York's veterans receive high-quality, culturally competent care and support.

NYHealth has largely focused its efforts on New York's Post-9/11 generation of veterans, who are distinct due to their more recent experiences on active duty and in transitioning to civilian life. Post-9/11 veterans have now been part of our communities for more than two decades, and as they have evolved over time, so too have their needs—shifting from immediate reintegration challenges to longer-term concerns around health, mental health, economic stability, and aging.

A persistent challenge in this work is a lack of timely data that reflects specific veteran populations, including Post-9/11 veterans. Veterans are often treated as a monolith, masking important differences across race, gender, and other identities.¹ Through our needs assessments and targeted research, we are among the few organizations helping to fill this gap. Policymakers need more and better information to serve our veterans and use resources most effectively. Without data on veteran sub-groups, these differences, as well as the needs they reflect, are not adequately understood.

¹ Grogan N, Moore E, Peabody B, Seymour M, Williams K. 2020. New York State Minority Veteran Needs Assessment. Center for a New American Security. Commissioned by the New York Health Foundation. Available at: <https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/files.cnas.org/documents/CNAS-Report-MVS-NY-Assessment-final.pdf>.

Who Are Post-9/11 Veterans?

The Post-9/11 veteran cohort represents a fundamental shift in the veteran population. Compared to earlier generations, these veterans are:

- **More racially and ethnically diverse:** Nearly 40% of recently separated veterans in New York identify as non-White.²
- **More highly educated:** Roughly half have a college degree or higher, due in large part to the Post-9/11 GI Bill.^{3,4}
- **More likely to be women:** Women are the fastest-growing segment of the veteran population, making up a significantly larger share than in prior eras.⁵ Women now make up approximately 9% of the veteran population, up from about 5% in 2000.^{6,7}

NYHealth has invested heavily to help close knowledge gaps. In 2024, we partnered with the RAND Corporation to conduct a needs assessment of recently separated veterans in New York—the first comprehensive review of veterans’ health and social service needs in 14 years. This assessment underscores the scope of need among the newest cohort of Post-9/11 veterans:

- One in three accessed mental health care in the past year.
- One in four likely has PTSD or depression.
- One in five did not receive needed mental health care.
- One in three is under 45.
- More than 60% reported having a disability and

² Ringel JS, Lejeune J, Phillips J, Robbins MW, Bradley MA, Wolf J, Timmer MJ. 2024. Understanding Veterans in New York. RAND Corporation. Commissioned by the New York Health Foundation. Available at:

https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RRA3300/RRA3304-1/RAND_RRA3304-1.pdf.

³ Ringel JS, Lejeune J, Phillips J, Robbins MW, Bradley MA, Wolf J, Timmer MJ. 2024. Understanding Veterans in New York. RAND Corporation. Commissioned by the New York Health Foundation. Available at:

https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RRA3300/RRA3304-1/RAND_RRA3304-1.pdf.

⁴ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Post-9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33). <https://www.va.gov/education/about-gi-bill-benefits/post-9-11/>, accessed April 2026.

⁵ Ringel JS, Lejeune J, Phillips J, Robbins MW, Bradley MA, Wolf J, Timmer MJ. 2024. Understanding Veterans in New York. RAND Corporation. Commissioned by the New York Health Foundation. Available at:

https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RRA3300/RRA3304-1/RAND_RRA3304-1.pdf.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). Veteran Status. *American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S2101*. Retrieved April 20, 2026, from

<https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2024.S2101?q=veterans+in+New+York&t=Veterans&g=040XX00US36>.

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). SEX BY AGE BY ARMED FORCES STATUS BY VETERAN STATUS FOR THE POPULATION 18 YEARS AND OVER [23]. *Decennial Census, DEC State Legislative District Summary File (Sample), Table P039*. Retrieved April 20, 2026, from

<https://data.census.gov/table/DECENNIALLS.LDS.P039?q=decennial+census+veterans+status+by+sex&g=040XX00US36>.

- Nearly one in four experienced food insecurity in the past year.⁸

Recently separated veterans reported relatively high insurance coverage and access to Veterans' Affairs (VA) health care, with 76% able to access VA services. Yet barriers to utilization remain; 75% of recently separated veterans report not knowing what benefits they are eligible for. The same proportion do not know where to get information on their benefits. Almost half of recently separated veterans (46%) believe that housing assistance and loans are helpful, but only one-fifth (19%) have used these benefits. These gaps in awareness are among the most consistent barriers identified across our work.⁹

Suicide and Deaths of Despair

Suicide remains one of the most urgent challenges facing veterans in New York, and Post-9/11 veterans are at heightened risk. NYHealth's research has found that in New York City, veterans die by suicide at roughly twice the rate of civilians.

Citywide, veterans aged 18-34, a group that largely overlaps with the Post-9/11 generation, have the highest suicide rates. Deaths of despair, which include suicide, alcohol-related disease, and drug overdose, are also significantly higher among veterans than among nonveterans. These disparities highlight the compounded risks facing veterans living in the city.¹⁰

Statewide, similar trends persist. Veterans die by suicide at more than twice the rate of the general population. Suicide rates among veterans aged 18-34 have nearly doubled from 2018 to 2023.¹¹

Risk factors vary significantly by age as well as by race and ethnicity, gender, and geography.¹² Research from Columbia University shows that social determinants of health, such as financial strain, unemployment, neighborhood characteristics, and trauma exposure, compound suicide risk.¹³

Justice Involvement and Risk

⁸ Ringel JS, Lejeune J, Phillips J, Robbins MW, Bradley MA, Wolf J, Timmer MJ. 2024. Understanding Veterans in New York. RAND Corporation. Commissioned by the New York Health Foundation. Available at: https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RRA3300/RRA3304-1/RAND_RRA3304-1.pdf.

⁹ Ringel JS, Lejeune J, Phillips J, Robbins MW, Bradley MA, Wolf J, Timmer MJ. 2024. Understanding Veterans in New York. RAND Corporation. Commissioned by the New York Health Foundation. Available at: https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RRA3300/RRA3304-1/RAND_RRA3304-1.pdf.

¹⁰ New York Health Foundation. Navigating the Crisis: Deaths of Despair and Suicide Among New York City Veterans. 2024. <https://nyhealthfoundation.org/resource/nyc-deaths-of-despair-suicide/>, accessed April 2026.

¹¹ New York Health Foundation. 2026. *Data snapshot: Veteran suicide in New York State 2023 update*. <https://nyhealthfoundation.org/resource/data-snapshot-veteran-suicide-in-new-york-state-2023-update/>

¹² New York Health Foundation. Navigating the Crisis: Deaths of Despair and Suicide Among New York City Veterans. 2024. <https://nyhealthfoundation.org/resource/nyc-deaths-of-despair-suicide/>, accessed April 2026.

¹³ Pietrzak RH, Fischer IC, Nichter B, Esterlis I, Krystal JH, Moutier CY, Oquendo MA, Jeste DV, Na PJ. Social Determinants of Health and Suicide Risk in US Military Veterans. *JAMA Psychiatry*. 2026. 83(3):315-318. doi: 10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2025.3883.

While most military veterans transition back to civilian life without major difficulties, some encounter significant challenges post-service, including mental health conditions, substance use, and difficulties navigating complex systems of care. These challenges are particularly relevant for Post-9/11 veterans, who are younger and more likely to experience conditions such as PTSD, depression, and service-connected disabilities.

For some veterans, these challenges increase the risk of involvement in the justice system.¹⁴ About half of incarcerated veterans report a mental health diagnosis at some time in their lives, compared to one-third of incarcerated civilians.¹⁵

Veterans Treatment Courts (VTCs) offer a promising intervention, providing treatment-focused alternatives to incarceration. New York City is fortunate to have VTCs operating in all 5 boroughs. Providing VTCs with the resources they need is one way to help veterans get their lives back on track.

Key Gaps and Recommendations

We know this: Post-9/11 veterans are at heightened risk for adverse outcomes, including suicide and justice involvement. Broadly, all veterans' services must be viewed through a suicide prevention lens, and planning must consider the ever-evolving needs of the most recent veterans.

To better serve Post-9/11 veterans, we urge the City to consider the following recommendations.

Improve Data Collection. Data gaps across veteran subpopulations constrain meaningful analysis and hinder effective policymaking. The Council should:

- Expand the City's disaggregated reporting on suicide and deaths of despair among veterans.
- Strengthen mortality review processes, including proposals to establish or enhance a suicide mortality review committee.
- Include veteran status in research efforts to improve transparency and accountability. Recently, the City Council voted to amend New York City's suicide reporting to explicitly include veteran status, among other demographics. If signed, the amendment to Introduced Bill 0291-2026 is an important step in gaining visibility for veteran suicides, including by sex and race/ethnicity.

¹⁴ Sayer NA, Noorbaloochi S, Frazier P =, Carlson K, Gravely A, Murdoch M. Reintegration problems and treatment interests among Iraq and Afghanistan combat veterans receiving VA medical care. *Psychiatry Services*. 2010;61, 589–597. doi: 10.1176/ps.2010.61.6.589.

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Justice. "Mental Health and Reentry: How Court Services Offender Agency Meets the Challenge of Mental Health Community Supervision." https://cops.usdoj.gov/html/dispatch/05-2022/mental_health_reentry.html#:~:text=Approximately%20half%20the%20people%20in,diagnosed%20with%20a%20mental%20illness, accessed April 2026.

- Encourage and support the widespread, consistent adoption of culturally competent screening for veteran status across health and social service settings to increase the number of veterans who self-identify.

Support Student Veterans During a Critical Transition Period. Transitioning from military to civilian life can be a particularly vulnerable period. Research shows that the first year after separation, sometimes referred to as the “deadly gap”, carries the highest risk of suicide among younger veterans.¹⁶ Increasing numbers of veterans are enrolling in post-secondary education and need tailored support. The Council should:

- Ensure access to culturally competent services on campus. Many veterans’ first contact with a mental health provider is on a college campus. But when student health center staff lack an understanding of military culture and aren’t attuned to the unique challenges veterans face, it can prolong or delay their treatment.
- Promote access to peer mentors. Sometimes, you don’t need a health care professional; you just need someone who can relate to you, veteran to veteran, when navigating life as a student veteran. New York State has invested over \$20 million to expand the successful Joseph P. Dwyer Peer Support Program across the State.

Equip the broader health system and community providers. As the VA increasingly purchases care from private providers, New York’s broader health care system must be prepared to meet the unique needs of Post-9/11 veterans. The Council should:

- Strengthen access to mental health services in the community. To meet veterans where they are, NYHealth has invested in expanding access to best-in-class mental health providers, such as the Headstrong Project and the NYU Langone Military Family Center—both founded here in New York City.
- Ensure that private providers are trained to recognize military service history and understand the distinct physical and behavioral health challenges veterans may face. Our research with RAND found that only 2.3% of New York State’s civilian health care providers met all seven criteria for ‘readiness’ to provide high-quality, timely, and culturally competent care to veterans.¹⁷

¹⁶ Sokol Y, Gromatsky M, Edwards ER, Greene AL, Geraci JC, Harris RE, Goodman M. The deadly gap: Understanding suicide among veterans transitioning out of the military. *Journal of Psychiatry Research*. 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2021.113875>.

¹⁷ Tanielian, T., Frank, L. S., Farris, C., Batka, C., Farmer, C. M., Robinson, E., Engel, C. C., Robbins, M. W., & Vaughan, C. A. 2018. *Ready or not? Assessing the capacity of New York State health care providers to meet the needs of veterans*. RAND Corporation. <https://nyhealthfoundation.org/resource/ready-not-assessing-capacity-new-york-state-health-providers-meet-needs-veterans/>

Strengthen outreach and engagement. Because some veterans who have served do not self-identify as veterans, traditional outreach methods may miss those most in need. The Council should:

- Expand community-based outreach strategies to meet younger veterans where they are. For example, we have partnered with New York Cares and the New York City Department of Veterans' Services (NYC DVS) to operate Mission: VetCheck. This program uses peer-based outreach to provide veterans with wellness check-ins, suicide screenings, and referrals to critical resources. The program has reached thousands of veterans and built a robust referral network for behavioral health, benefits counseling, and housing support.¹⁸ The City should explore opportunities to expand upon this program model to meet the specific needs of veterans.
- Consider ways to not only connect our newest veterans to services, but also to meaningfully engage them and center their voices in shaping the policies and programs designed to serve them and build responsive, effective systems of care.

Conclusion

Post-9/11 veterans represent a generation that is more diverse and more educated, and that faces complex, interconnected challenges. Addressing these challenges will require better data, stronger coordination, and a strong emphasis on suicide prevention.

At NYHealth, we remain committed to building that evidence base and to ensuring that those who have served receive the care and support they deserve. I hope you will look to the New York Health Foundation as a partner and resource for this work. You can learn more about our veterans' health work on our website, www.nyhealthfoundation.org.

¹⁸New York Health Foundation. New York Cares: Maximizing Veterans' Access to New Health Care Benefits, Phase 2. <https://nyhealthfoundation.org/grantee/new-york-cares-2/>, accessed April 2026.

Testimony

New York City Council
Committee on Veterans
Serving Post-9/11 Veterans

Wednesday, April 23, 2026

Submitted by:
SAGE

On behalf of SAGE and the LGBTQ+ elders and older New Yorkers living with HIV whom we serve, thank you to the members of the New York City Council Committee on Veterans for providing a platform to speak on serving post-9/11 veterans.

Founded in New York in 1978, SAGE is the country's first and largest organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBTQ+ older people and helping them age with dignity and security. We have been serving LGBTQ+ elders and older New Yorkers living with HIV, including veterans, for almost five decades. We provide comprehensive social services and community-building programs through our network of LGBTQ+ welcoming older adult centers across New York City – called “SAGE Centers” – and through our partners across the state. We also operate SAGEVets, New York City's only program designed to address the unique needs of older LGBTQ+ military service veterans, which helps older LGBTQ+ veterans access VA benefits, supports their overall health and wellness, and provides referrals for discharge status upgrades.

New York City has long failed to prioritize the programs and services that help older adults, including veterans, remain in their communities as they age. We are optimistic that our new Mayor will begin to address some of these challenges, especially at a time when older adults already make up 1 in 5 New Yorkers, a number that is projected to grow to 25% by 2040. Over the past few decades, the city has underfunded and undervalued older adult programs, making it nearly impossible for providers to meet the growing need. As a result, many organizations that help veterans navigate VA benefits and provide other services such as the city's Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) posts are struggling to keep their doors open.¹

Older LGBTQ+ adults and veterans are often invisible, disconnected from services, and severely isolated without traditional biological familial supports. They are far more likely to live alone and less likely to rely on adult children or other family members for informal caregiving. In fact, 25% of SAGE's constituents have reported not having anyone else to call during an emergency. Because of these thin support networks, LGBTQ+ older people need to rely more heavily on community service providers for care as they age.

Furthermore, for LGBTQ+ older veterans, the military's long history of enforcing anti-gay and anti-trans policies followed by the discriminatory “Don't Ask, Don't Tell” law, has created many barriers between them and their Federal VA benefits. This has contributed to LGBTQ+ veterans facing significantly higher levels of economic and

¹ Paolicelli, A. (2025). As veterans age, New York City's VFW posts fight to keep doors open. *Spectrum News*.
<https://ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/news/2025/11/11/as-veterans-age--new-york-city-s-vfw-posts-fight-to-keep-doors-open>

housing instability compared to non-LGBTQ+ veterans.² For instance, rates of homelessness for transgender veterans are three times higher than rates for cisgender veterans.³ Additionally, LGBTQ+ veterans are four times more likely to report finding it difficult to get by financially and more than twice as likely to report being unable to pay some bills over the past month compared to non-LGBTQ+ veterans.⁴

The Department of Veterans' Services Strategic Plan for 2026-2030 details several initiatives to support veterans living in NYC, including focusing on housing stability, workforce support, behavioral health peer support, and navigating VA benefits. While this Strategic Plan is a great starting point, we urge the City Council to continue supporting the efforts of the Department of Veterans' Services and the Mayor to honor the service of all veterans, including the LGBTQ+ older veterans whom SAGE serves, and ensure that they can access the housing, healthcare, employment, and other resources that they need to remain in their communities as they age. Thank you.

² Mahowald, Lindsey. "LGBTQ+ Military Members and Veterans Face Economic, Housing, and Health Insecurities". Center for American Progress. April 28, 2022. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/lgbtq-military-members-and-veterans-face-economic-housing-and-health-insecurities>

³ Carter, Sarah P et al. "Housing Instability Characteristics Among Transgender Veterans Cared for in the Veterans Health Administration, 2013-2016." *American journal of public health* vol. 109,10 (2019): 1413-1418. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2019.305219

⁴ Federal Reserve Board. (last accessed January 2026). "Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking". https://www.federalreserve.gov/consumerscommunities/shed_data.htm

**TESTIMONY OF JOSEPH BELLO
NY METROVETS**

BEFORE

**THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
VETERANS COMMITTEE**

TOPIC: OVERSIGHT: SERVING POST-9/11 VETERANS

April 23, 2026

Chair Morano, members of the Veterans Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's oversight hearing on serving Post-9/11 veterans.

Post-9/11 veterans have distinct needs, particularly in the areas of transition, including housing, employment, education and family stability. In New York City, where it's estimated 28,000 Post-9/11 veterans live, these needs are shaped not only by military service but by the complexity and cost of living in an urban environment. These transition challenges are also tied to mental health needs and the well-documented risks associated with the first year(s) after separation from military service.

In New York City, services are largely delivered through the Department of Veterans' Services (DVS). However, in practice, Post-9/11 veterans rely most heavily on transition-focused services, making capacity and organizational structure critically important.

When responsibility for transition services is distributed across staff who also carry broader leadership, operational or strategic portfolios, it can create gaps in ownership, continuity and programmatic focus. These overlapping responsibilities can strain capacity, fragment accountability and reduce the sustained attention required to effectively serve OIF/OEF veterans. Programs benefit from focused leadership and the ability to continuously adapt to evolving needs.

At the same time, as I've said before, there is a broader lack of publicly available data on outcomes for veterans. Without this information, it is difficult to assess whether Post-9/11 veterans are being effectively reached and served.

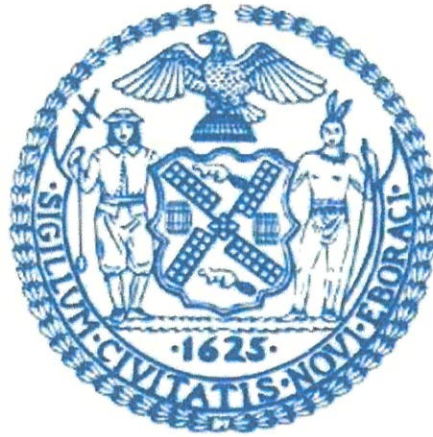
I also want to express support for Intro. 0488-2026, which would require the Department of Housing Preservation and Development to submit annual reports on the use of veteran preference in Mitchell-Lama developments.

Veterans are entitled to a preference in Mitchell-Lama housing, yet there is currently little public data on how that preference is implemented in practice. This bill would require HPD to report key information, including how many veterans apply, how many are selected, and how veteran status is verified. Like DVS, this level of transparency is essential to effective oversight. Without data, it is difficult to determine whether veteran preference policies are functioning as intended or whether there are gaps in access or oversight.

Importantly, this legislation does not create new burdens on applicants or restrict access. Instead, it strengthens accountability by ensuring the City is able to track outcomes and maintain clear safeguards around eligibility. By establishing consistent reporting, Intro. 488-2026 will help policymakers better evaluate existing policies and strengthen support for veterans seeking affordable housing.

I respectfully urge the Council to pass this Intro. and want to thank both CM Brewer for originally addressing Mitchell-Lama housing for veterans back in 2009 (Res. 2256) and to CM Vernikov for re-introducing the Intro. in this Council. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.

New York City Council



Committee on Veterans

Thursday, April 23, 2026

Quotes

"A nation is judged by how well it treats its veterans,"
US President George Washington

"To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan"
U.S. President Abraham Lincoln

"Our debt to the heroic men and valiant women in the service of our country can never be repaid. They have earned our undying gratitude. America will never forget their sacrifices."
US President Harry Truman

"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them."
US President John F. Kennedy

"The willingness of America's veterans to sacrifice for our country has earned them our lasting gratitude."
Jeff Miller

"The veterans of our military services have put their lives on the line to protect the freedoms that we enjoy. They have dedicated their lives to their country and deserve to be recognized for their commitment."
Judd Gregg

"I respect every soldier, from every country, who serves beside us in the hard work of history. America is grateful, and America will not forget."
George W. Bush

"While we can never do enough to show gratitude to our nation's defenders, we can always do a little more."
Gary Sinise

"The true soldier fights not because he hates what is in front of him, but because he loves what is behind him."
G.K. Chesterton

"The real hero is the man who fights even though he is scared"
General George S. Patton Jr.



The American Legion

DEPARTMENT OF NEW YORK
BRONX COUNTY ORG INC.

1530 Hutchinson River Pkwy • Bronx, NY 10461

TO: New York City Council Committee on Veterans

FROM: Bronx County Commander -Sergeant First Class Ricardo Garcia, US Army Ret. OIF Disabled Combat Veteran

DATE: Thursday, April 25, 2026

RE: Statement for Public Submission: 250th Commemoration of United States and OIF/OEF Ticker-Tape Parade

Last year, on May 22nd, 2025, in a public press release, former **Mayor Eric Adams committed the city to hosting the “Homecoming of Heroes: A Ticker Tape Parade Honoring Our Post-9/11 Combat Veterans and Their Families,”** a historic tribute recognizing the extraordinary service, sacrifice, and resilience of a generation that bore the weight of America’s longest war¹. Recently, New York City’s withdrawal from key major commemorative and celebratory events sends a deeply concerning message—not only to New Yorkers, but to the entire nation. At a moment when we should be preparing to lead, we are instead stepping back.

The lack of commitment to preparing programming noteworthy of the **250th Anniversary of the United States, the 25th Anniversary of September 11, 2001,** and, more consequentially, the decision to cancel the highly anticipated **Ticker Tape Parade honoring the 25th Anniversary of Operation Enduring Freedom and subsequently Operation Iraqi Freedom** has left many questioning how our city intends to properly recognize and commemorate these historic milestones. The fundamental question asked by many now is:

What does New York City stand for, if not the commemoration of our nation’s history and the recognition of those who defended it?

It is important to understand the scale of sacrifice associated with these conflicts. According to official Department of Defense reporting and major casualty tracking data, the human cost of these wars includes:

- **Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF):** approximately **4,419** U.S. service members killed
- **Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF – Afghanistan):** approximately **2,459** U.S. service members killed
- **Operation New Dawn (OND – Iraq transition phase):** approximately **74** U.S. service members killed

These figures represent thousands of families, communities, and lives permanently changed in service to the United States during the longest sustained conflict in American history. Yet despite this extraordinary sacrifice, there has been no unified ticker-tape recognition in the Canyon of Heroes for this generation of veterans.

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“FOR GOD AND COUNTRY”



The American Legion

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While the city has stated that hosting the upcoming **FIFA World Cup** will place an incredible strain on city resources, resulting in the shift in priorities toward supporting the event, I ask: what plausible reason do we have not to rise to the occasion and meet all of these demands together as a City, State, and Nation? Yes, the FIFA World Cup is a significant global event, and we understand the logistical challenges associated with hosting an event of that scale, but it cannot—and must not—come at the expense of honoring our country's founding, our resilience in the face of terror. Nor should it diminish our **obligation to recognize the sacrifices of an entire generation of veterans, to whom we are eternally indebted.**

The Mayor's proposal of a symbolic Five-Borough ruck march, while commendable, is NOT sufficient. These milestones demand more than symbolism; they demand visible, historic, and dignified recognition worthy of their significance.

To properly illustrate this importance, I remind everyone of what occurred **on April 30, 1789; General George Washington marked the birth of our American constitutional government** in both a symbolic and physical way that endures to this day². After taking the oath of office at Federal Hall on Wall Street, he attended services at St. Paul's Chapel and **walked along Broadway—establishing a living, geographic link between faith, leadership, and the founding of our Republic.**

Broadway—is more than a roadway. **It is a sacred civic ground.** Today, it is known as the **Canyon of Heroes**, where, for generations, New York City has honored acts of extraordinary service, valor, and national significance through ticker-tape parades³. These are not mere celebrations; they are declarations of who we are as a people and what we value as a nation. History proves that even in moments of severe crisis, **New York City has never abandoned this responsibility.**

And history makes something else unmistakably clear: every major American military campaign and generation of service members has been publicly and ceremonially recognized along this very route. **From World War I and World War II, to Korea, Vietnam, and the Gulf War, those who served walked down the Canyon of Heroes—welcomed home by a grateful city and a grateful nation³.** Every era of war was acknowledged. Every generation was honored. **Every sacrifice was made visible. Every generation—except one.**

The veterans of **Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom—who fought in the longest sustained conflict in American history⁴**—have yet to receive that same unified, ceremonial recognition in the Canyon of Heroes. That absence is not just an oversight; it is a deviation from generations of precedent and principle. It sends a message, whether intended or not, that their service stands apart—when in truth, it stands among the greatest chapters of American military history.

Even more concerning is the contrast in priorities. **At the very moment the Homecoming of Heroes parade was being canceled, members of the New York City Council were actively advocating for and urging the Mayor to host a ticker-tape parade for the Artemis astronauts of NASA⁵.** Let us be clear: honoring American achievement in space is worthy and appropriate. But to elevate that call while simultaneously stepping back from honoring the men and women who fought and sacrificed in two decades of war raises a fundamental question of values and priorities.

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What message does that send to our veterans and their families? What does it say about what—and who—we choose to celebrate?

Today, we are told that a projected \$5 billion budget gap prevents us from doing the same. In **1975**, at the height of New York City's fiscal collapse—immortalized by the New York Daily News headline "**Ford to City: Drop Dead**"⁶, the city stood on the brink of bankruptcy. Yet what followed is a testament to leadership, resolve, and ingenuity. **City officials did not retreat; they acted.** Working alongside state and federal partners, civic organizations, and the private sector, they mobilized resources across every level of society. Business leaders, veterans' groups, philanthropic institutions, and everyday citizens contributed time, funding, and support to ensure that the nation's Bicentennial would be honored in its first capital city.

Through coordination between City Hall, New York State government, and federal entities, including support tied to national Bicentennial initiatives, leaders assembled a patchwork of public and private partnerships that made the celebration possible despite financial hardship. The result: on July 6, 1976, New York City held a ticker-tape parade that honored 200 years of American independence and recognized the service and sacrifice of those in uniform⁷. But we must ask—are our circumstances truly more dire than the near-bankruptcy of the 1970s? Or is the difference not one of capability, but of will? Let us be clear: this was not achieved because the city had money to spare. It was **achieved because leaders made a deliberate choice to prioritize national commemoration and worked relentlessly to secure the necessary support.**

New York City has already shown us the blueprint. In a time of deeper crisis, leaders chose action over excuse. They mobilized, they partnered, and they delivered. Will today's leaders do what their predecessors did in 1976—reach across government, engage the private sector, and rally the people of this city and nation to make this happen? Will they leverage partnerships, sponsorships, and civic pride to overcome financial constraints? Or will we allow this defining moment in American history to pass without the recognition it deserves?

The upcoming **250th anniversary of the United States—the Semi-quincentennial in 2026—is a once-in-a-generation moment.** It is an opportunity to honor the full arc of American service, from World War II to modern conflicts such as Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. **It is a moment to reaffirm New York City's role as the cradle of our nation's government and a global symbol of resilience and freedom.** Is the 250th anniversary any less important than the Bicentennial? The answer is unequivocally no. So the question before us is not whether we can afford to do this, it is whether we can afford **NOT** to. And if we can, are we willing to lead this nation forward?

My question to this committee, all New York City, State, and Federal Elected Leaders, is: Are you willing to do the same today for GOD and Country?

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Footnotes

1. Office of the Mayor of New York City, Press Release, May 22, 2025, announcing “Homecoming of Heroes: A Ticker Tape Parade Honoring Our Post-9/11 Combat Veterans and Their Families.”
2. Library of Congress; National Archives, records of the Presidential Inauguration of George Washington, April 30, 1789.
3. New York City Department of Records and Information Services; official records of ticker-tape parades and the designation of the Canyon of Heroes.
4. U.S. Department of Defense; Congressional Research Service reports on the duration of Operation Enduring Freedom (2001–2021).
5. Public statements and correspondence from New York City Council Members regarding recognition of NASA Artemis program astronauts (2024–2025).
6. “Ford to City: Drop Dead,” *New York Daily News*, October 30, 1975.
7. New York City Bicentennial Commission; historical records of the July 6, 1976 ticker-tape parade commemorating the United States Bicentennial

NYC Total Military Connected Population

NYC Total Military Connected Population				
Region	Veterans (Low)	Veterans (High)	Dependents (Low)	Dependents (High)
NYC - Bronx	25,000	38,000	37,500	57,000
NYC - Brooklyn (Kings)	37,000	57,000	55,500	85,500
NYC - Manhattan (New York)	31,000	48,000	46,500	72,000
NYC - Queens	42,000	65,000	63,000	97,500
NYC - Staten Island (Richmond)	15,000	22,000	22,500	33,000
NYC TOTAL	130,000	200,000	195,000	300,000
Westchester County	23,744	23,744	36,000	46,000
Nassau County	33,524	33,524	50,000	66,500
Suffolk County	51,813	51,813	78,000	103,000
Dutchess County	11,000	15,000	17,000	25,000
NEW YORK STATE TOTAL	688,611	688,611	1,030,000	137,0000

"Homecoming of Heroes" Ticker Tape Parade

Community Boards

City Council Discretionary Funding

PFC Dwyer Veterans' Support Program

Laws Impacting Veterans

NYC Veteran and Military Community Survey

Veterans Advisory Board

Post 9/11 Fallen Service Member Memorial

["Homecoming of Heroes" Ticker Tape Parade](#)

New York City Vietnam War POW/MIAs

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On July 6, 2026, the City of New York will host **Homecoming of Heroes: A Ticker Tape Parade Honoring our Post-9/11 Combat Veterans, First Responders and their Families**. It will be a historic tribute recognizing the extraordinary service, sacrifice, and resilience of a generation that bore the weight of America's longest war.

This celebration will be the first time New York City, and this nation, formally recognize veterans of the Global War on Terror (GWOT) with a parade down the famed Canyon of Heroes. The event comes at a powerful moment in national and international history—on the heels of the 250th birthdays of the U.S. Army, Navy, and Marine Corps, the 400th birthday of New York City, and the return of the International Naval Review 250, bringing allied fleets from around the world to New York Harbor in a rare show of global maritime unity and respect.

The Homecoming of Heroes parade will also include members of the FDNY, NYPD, and Port Authority Police Department, whose service on and after September 11, 2001, is inextricably tied to the legacy of the Post-9/11 generation.

We're honoring the very Veterans who made America's 250th birthday possible, two days after we celebrate the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

If you are interested in sponsoring the Homecoming of Heroes ticker tape parade, please visit the Mayor's Fund website by clicking [HERE](#).

Global War on Terror (GWOT) By the Numbers

Service and Deployment

- 2.9 Million U.S. Service Members served since 2001
- 1.9 Million deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan
- 3 Million+ tours of duty over 30 days

Casualties and Sacrifice

- 7,064 Killed in action
- 53,436 Wounded in action
- 6 Missing in Action (MIA)

After the War

- 31,177 Post-9/11 Veteran suicides (as of May 2021)
- 36% of Post-9/11 Veterans experience PTSD
- 520,000+ cancer diagnoses among Post-9/11 Veterans

[View The "Homecoming of Heroes" Ticker Tape Parade Press Release](#) ▶

New York City to Host "Homecoming of Heroes," First Major-City Ticker Tape Parade Honoring Post-9/11 Combat Veterans and Their Families

May 22, 2025

What you should know

- Historic Celebration to Mark Military Service, National Milestones, and Shared Resilience of New Generation of Americans

NEW YORK – New York City Mayor Eric Adams and New York City Department of Veterans’ Services (DVS) Commissioner James Hendon today announced that the City of New York will next year host a ticker tape parade celebrating the service of post-9/11 servicemembers and veterans — the first of its kind in a major city in the nation. On Monday, July 6, 2026, the City of New York will host “Homecoming of Heroes: A Ticker Tape Parade Honoring Our Post-9/11 Combat Veterans and Their Families,” a historic tribute recognizing the extraordinary service, sacrifice, and resilience of a generation that bore the weight of America’s longest war.

This celebration will be the first time New York City, or any major city in the nation, formally recognizes veterans of the Global War on Terror with a parade down the famed Canyon of Heroes. The event comes at a powerful moment in national and international history — on the heels of the 250th birthdays of the United States Army, Navy, and Marine Corps; the 400th birthday of New York City; and the return of the International Naval Review 250, bringing allied fleets from around the world to New York Harbor in a rare show of global maritime unity and respect.

“The ‘Homecoming of Heroes’ parade is not merely a celebration — it is a historic moment in which a major city unites to solemnly honor the extraordinary service, sacrifice, and resilience of our post-9/11 combat veterans in Iraq and Afghanistan,” said **Mayor Adams**. “Our veterans and their families matter to us — not just during the wartime they fought in, but in the peacetime they achieved. This parade marks a small seed of our gratitude for all those who watered the tree of liberty so that we can sit under its shade. It is because of these brave men and women that we can cherish the most precious gift we have: our freedom.”

“This is more than a parade — it’s a moment of national reflection and a promise kept,” said **DVS Commissioner Hendon**. “For the post-9/11 generation of combat veterans and their families, this march down Broadway is a symbol of belonging, of closure, and of collective pride. We served through two decades of war. Now, together, we write the next chapter — one of unity, recognition, and possibility.”

The Global War on Terror — initiated in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 — mobilized an entire generation of Americans. More than 2.9 million servicemembers served during this era, with 1.9 million deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan across more than 3 million tours of duty lasting over 30 days. The toll of these conflicts on U.S. servicemembers and their families has been profound — reflected in the lives lost, the injuries sustained, and the challenges many continue to face.

- 7,057 U.S. troops killed in action
- 53,436 troops wounded
- Six troops still missing in action
- 31,177 post-9/11 veterans lost to suicide as of 2021 — more than four times the number killed in combat

The long-term impact of these wars continues to ripple through the lives of those who served. An estimated 36 percent of post-9/11 veterans live with post-traumatic stress disorder, and over 520,000 cancer diagnoses have been recorded in this population — many linked to toxic exposures.

The Homecoming of Heroes parade will also include members of numerous city and state agencies, whose service on and after September 11, 2001, is inextricably tied to the legacy of the post-9/11 generation.

The Homecoming of Heroes offers a powerful opportunity to rally around those who stepped forward in America’s time of need, and to shine a light on the contributions they continue to make in every field and every borough of this great city and nation. The added presence of the International Naval Review further elevates this global moment of unity, tribute, and transformation.

Additional details, including community events and engagement opportunities, will be released in the months ahead. For sponsorship or production support, please contact connect@veterans.nyc.gov.

Mayor Mamdani replaces 'Homecoming of Heroes' parade with new 9/11 'Remembrance Ruck'

The first-of-its-kind "Remembrance Ruck" will bring together veteran groups across the city on the Brooklyn Bridge to celebrate NYC vets and military community.

[Heather Fordham](#) • Apr 13, 2026, 5:00 PM • Updated 7 days ago

Share:



This September, Mayor Zohran Mamdani is charting a new course in how he plans to honor veterans and those who made the ultimate sacrifice on Sept. 11, 2001.

The first-of-its-kind "Remembrance Ruck" will bring together veteran groups across the city on the Brooklyn Bridge to celebrate NYC vets and military community.

The ruck, which involves walking or hiking a certain distance with a weighted backpack or vest is scheduled for Sept. 13 at Cadman Plaza in Brooklyn.

Participants will ruck across the Brooklyn Bridge and end at Foly Square in Manhattan, while carrying the names of those fallen soldiers, according to the mayor's office.

The end of the ruck will include a resource fair, where veterans can get information on supportive housing, mental health services and other essential support that the city offers for veterans.

"New York City is incomplete without our veterans, whose contribution to this city is immeasurable. I am thrilled to be hosting and participating in the first-ever city sponsored ruck where we will be gathering for a day of remembrance, gratitude and support. Our administration is grateful to our veterans' contributions to New York City and committed to supporting them in return, not just through celebratory events but through long-term, durable support." said Mayor Mamdani.

The mayor's office says this event will be held in place of the "Homecoming of Heroes" ticker tape parade announced by the prior administration.

This summer, the Department of Veterans Services and the mayor will also participate in the International Naval Review and Parade of Tall Ships for the America 250 and Fleet Week.

"Every step of this 'Remembrance Ruck' carries purpose, honoring our post-9/11 veterans and the families who stood beside them. Because when one person serves, an entire family carries the burden, the pride, and the sacrifice. Through this Remembrance Ruck, we are bringing together veteran communities and supporters to stand as one, recreating the bond and camaraderie that never fades after service, while opening doors to the support and resources our families deserve his is not just remembrance it is action, said Yesenia Mata, Department of Veteran Services Commissioner.

City officials say that beyond the ceremony, Mayor Mamdani and the Department of Veterans' Services are expanding support for New York City veterans, from housing and rental assistance to job training, education benefits, business support, and access to mental-health and health care services.

Passing on the Parade: What the Mamdani Administration Got Wrong in Trading a Parade for a Ruck

How a canceled ticker-tape parade and a new “Remembrance Ruck” sparked debate over how New York City recognizes post-9/11 veterans

Joe Bello - Apr 16, 2026



On Easter Sunday, Mayor Mamdani visited a [supportive housing residence in the Bronx](#), sitting down for a meal with formerly homeless veterans. The visit was seen as a moment of listening, connection and unity; a signal of a “new era” focused on engagement, inclusion and meeting veterans where they are.

However, this week the administration made a decision that has not landed well with many in the military and veterans’ community.

On Monday, the administration [quietly announced through the press](#) that it would replace the planned July “Homecoming of Heroes” ticker-tape parade, first [announced last May by the Adams administration](#), with a new “Remembrance Ruck” and resource fair scheduled for September 13th, but tied to the anniversary of September 11th.

On paper, it reads as a substitution of one form of recognition for another. In reality, it raises a deeper question: what kind of recognition are veterans being given and does a ruck match the event it’s meant to replace?

The answer, for many veterans, is no.

New York City’s ticker-tape parades are historically significant events. They honor major achievements, from returning service members to astronauts and athletes. They are statements of public recognition designed for scale, visibility and shared acknowledgment.

The last “Welcome Home” ticker-tape parade for a major conflict was in 1991, following Desert Storm (see picture above). That history matters because it shaped expectations when the Post 9/11 parade was announced last May.

The “Remembrance Ruck,” by contrast, is a very different kind of event. It’s smaller in scale, more reflective in tone and tied explicitly to the September 11th anniversary. It is framed around remembrance and resource engagement rather than public celebration.

And that’s where the tension begins.

Before addressing the implications, it’s important to acknowledge the issues that likely played a role in the decision by the administration not to move forward with the parade.

The city is currently facing an estimated \$5.4 billion budget deficit, which inevitably shapes what’s feasible. Large-scale events like ticker-tape parades carry significant financial and logistical costs. At the same time, the city is also managing bigger operational issues. In recent weeks, [the administration issued an emergency order](#) limiting large-scale events during July’s America 250 celebrations and the overlapping FIFA World Cup, citing strain on police, fire and other city resources.

There were also issues specific to the parade itself. Many veterans, including post-9/11 veterans, were not even aware it was being planned, in large part due to limited outreach and communication from the city. However, it was known in some circles that the previous administration had not secured private funding to support the event.

By the time the Mamdani administration addressed this issue publicly, there were roughly eleven weeks left to execute an event of that scale, creating pressure to either quickly stand something up or rethink the approach entirely.

Those issues help explain how the decision likely came about but they don’t erase the perception or frustration that followed.

For many post-9/11 veterans, the issue is not whether the city should hold commemorative events. It’s whether this “substitution” matches what a ticker-tape parade was meant to represent: a visible, public acknowledgment of service and sacrifice.

Because for many veterans, this is not simply about logistics or budget pressure. It’s about what replaces a moment that carried symbolic weight from the moment it was announced. A parade signals public recognition at scale; a ruck signals something more intimate and somber – forms of acknowledgement that are not interchangeable.

For many, a “Remembrance Ruck,” held in connection with the September 11th anniversary, is not a celebration of, or for, veterans.

The issue is not just when the event is held, but what it represents. September 11th is reflective, somber and rooted in loss, and framing an event around that moment carries a different meaning than an act of public recognition for veterans who served in the years that followed. That distinction matters, especially for post-9/11 veterans, many of whom deployed multiple times and whose service has [often felt distant from the broader public](#).

And that is where the concern sharpens.

For many post-9/11 veterans, the difference is not symbolic nuance. It’s the difference between being remembered and being recognized by a grateful nation. Public recognition at scale also matters and that’s why this replacement has struck a nerve.

When a parade of this magnitude is removed, it’s not simply an event that disappears. It is a form of visibility that disappears with it, and for many veterans, that’s not forgotten.

Paul Rieckhoff's Post IAVA Founder Post on Ticker Tape Parade Cancellation

[Paul Rieckhoff](#) is at [Madison Square Park, 6d](#) · [New York, NY](#) ·

[Uncool](#) · [Courtney Love](#) ·

Mamdani just canceled the ticker tape parade for Post-9/11 vets and stole a planned ruck march from a local a vets group to put in its place. Without giving them any credit.

<https://bronx.news12.com/mayor-mamdani-replaces...>

This certainly isn't a move that will bring MORE attention to vets than what was already planned. But maybe it ensures Trump won't try to participate. Because he sure as hell ain't ruck marching.

But after skipping the Veterans Day parade, Mamdani continues to make surprising decisions around vets stuff.

He has also named his new NYC Veterans Commissioner—Yesenia Mata—who I'd never heard of. I don't know any local veterans advocates who had. Reviewing her bio, she has absolutely no experience or leadership in veteran policy, services or affairs. Her only relevant vets experience seems to be that she's a newly-promoted Captain. But she did work on the Bernie Sanders presidential campaign. A guy who had an awful record as Chair of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee.

Mata looks like an exceptionally inexperienced veterans advocate—but a reliable lefty political ally. Like too many others in this new Mamdani team. This is not a job where you can afford to have a steep learning curve. Especially when Mamdani already so mistrusted by so many cops—many of whom are also vets. And it was definitely a missed opportunity to add someone to his team who's not a Democrat.

The next spot to watch him on is Memorial Day and Fleet Week in NYC next month. Will he set foot on a ship and get his picture taken with any aircraft or weapons systems? Will he attend at all? Or will he go back to the same low-profile homeless vets program he's already been to twice?

Watch this space. NYC vets are. 🇺🇸 🇩🇪

You May Have Heard That Mayor Mamdani Stole Our Ruck March. Let's Talk About It.

The Truth Behind The Rumors & Why Honoring The Post-9/11 Generation of Veterans Requires More Attention To Detail.

Michael Matos and [Five Borough Veterans](#) Apr 20, 2026



The 2023 Memorial Ruck March, bringing together military-connected New Yorkers of all generations.

Since the announcement of the [Mayor's "Remembrance Ruck"](#), we've received waves of calls, emails and text messages expressing frustration surrounding the cancelation of the "Homecoming Heroes" parade and the creation of a ruck march that looks seemingly familiar to ours here at Five Borough Veterans.

First and foremost, we hear you, which is why I wanted to address this directly to all of you.

The Original Plan

As many of you know, the Memorial Ruck March was a personal tradition of mine that acted as both an event to build camaraderie, but also an educational opportunity to visit each of the memorials on our route and learn their history from our chosen guest speakers. This event has joined multiple generations of our community together with the general public, speaking to my personal mission of building the bridge between military-connected and non-military New Yorkers. This year, our founding year, will be the first time we host the Memorial Ruck March as an official Five Borough Veterans event.

When we first announced the event, the Mamdani Administration reached out to us, was eager to learn more, and wanted to join us on May 24th as we march the five miles from Brooklyn to Manhattan. We were ecstatic and sent over the details, including our route. After all, this would be the first time a sitting Mayor would be joining the military-connected community in an event that holds such a personal meaning to us all.

Upon receiving confirmation of his attendance, I shared the news with our leadership team and our organizing partners, so we can begin to put the necessary safety protocols in place to ensure the Mayor's first event with our community was a memorable one that welcomes him into our way of life. Plans were set, and the work was done. That was the last word from the administration.

On April 13th, to our surprise, the announcement was made of the replacement of the "Homecoming Heroes" parade, with a new "Remembrance Ruck" and resource fair in September. We weren't initially aware of it until the community reached out to us with the news.

Lack of Communication Is The Ongoing Trend

While we are flattered by the Mayor finding inspiration in our event to replicate in his September plan, we do have concerns with how the Mayor has treated our community behind his social media campaigns and press conferences. As you all know, we hosted our first Candidate Roundtable Series and Voter Guide last October to bring the candidates running for Mayor, Public Advocate and Comptroller face to face with our advocates to discuss their platforms and how they align with our concerns as the military-connected community. Every candidate participated, except two. Former Governor Cuomo never replied to us. The, then Assemblymember Mamdani, accepted our invitation, only to never show up to his scheduled time slot. We never heard back from his campaign as to why.

Fast forwarding to the present, we recently celebrated the passage of Intro-291A, a law that now requires the Commissioner of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to track the impact of suicide on New Yorkers annually, including our amendment of veteran status as a standalone data point. The bill passed the City Council with an overwhelming majority and made its way to the Mayor's desk for signature. Unfortunately, we were made aware that it was [returned, unsigned](#). This was a bill with no fiscal impact on the city's budget, that would take the first steps to effectively address veteran suicide in New York City, a virus that is wreaking havoc in our community nationwide.

When I first accepted the responsibility of serving as President of the Five Borough Veterans, I held numerous conversations with fellow advocates and families around the city, to understand what they needed most from our efforts. One message, consistently shared, has stuck with me to this day:

“Do not let them (elected officials) use us as props anymore.”

Which is why when we hear that “This is a new era that wants to make sure that veterans and their families are included” in the press, but actions behind closed doors don't match the message, we will speak up.

This is a community trained to be leaders. If the Mayor wants to truly wants to work with us, he must learn the first lesson we all did about effective leadership: how to follow.

The Complexity of the Post-9/11 Generation of Veterans

We are rapidly approaching the 25th anniversary of the attack on the Pentagon, The Twin Towers and the loss of Flight 93, where everyday people gave their lives to stop Al-Qaeda hijackers from taking more American lives in Washington, D.C. This is the event that became the starting point of the longest war in American history, and for many of us, the reason why we chose to serve.

I was six years old, in the middle of reading class in the first grade, when my school was evacuated on the west side of Manhattan as the twin towers came down. I would learn in the coming weeks, that one of my role models, FDNY Captain Patrick J. Brown of Ladder 3, a Marine, gave his life refusing the order to evacuate the North Tower, committed to ensuring as many people made it out of the tower safely as he could. As I grew older, inspired by the Captain's legacy, I looked to serve the public as he did. Then I learned about the Great Boatlift of 9/11, the largest maritime evacuation in history, rescuing half a million people from Manhattan in nine hours, led by the United States Coast Guard. I found my call to service and served ten years in the Coast Guard, specialized in Search & Rescue and Anti-Terrorism.

We all have our own story.

What's the most important lesson to be shared about our generation is simple: we didn't win. We spent twenty years fighting wars we were told was to ensure our freedom. That we were providing safety from weapons of mass destruction. Liberating oppressed populations. Then, in a matters of months, we left.

I witnessed friends deal with the moral injury of watching the Taliban acquire equipment ordered to be left behind by our forces. Fellow advocates scrambled to ensure the safe evacuation of their interpreters, now being hunted by their oppressors for helping American forces. Organizations like Stop Soldier Suicide [reported a 92% increase in veterans seeking help](#), while the VA crisis line saw a record number of calls. For those of us that worked on the [Afghan Adjustment Act](#) with organizations like the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), we had Afghan families reaching out to us directly on social media, begging for us to not abandon them and to help them get their families to safety.

These stories, experiences and wounds requires more than a short ruck march and resource fair to effectively address.

A Message To Mayor Mamdani

You have a unique opportunity available to you Mr. Mayor.

The military-connected community is one of the most civically engaged, community focused populations we have in American society, and it's much larger than you may think here in New York City.

Ruck marches are deeply personal to us, and are held frequently by community partners beyond just ourselves, like The American Legion, Veterans for Foreign Wars, United War Veterans Council and the Travis Manion Foundation. You are more than welcome to (and should) join us when we host them, but come to learn and engage with us, not host one of your own and expect us to come running to yours.

Learn from us, so we can better support you as you lead the city that we all love.

If you do plan to move forward with a resource fair style event, I recommend the following:

- Connect with and include the leaders of the 9/11 Memorial & Museum in the planning conversations. Their [Chairman/CEO](#) is an Air Force veteran who can help guide the intentionality of this event with her years of experience in leadership.
- Position the event as a celebration of not only their service, but the impact the Post-9/11 generation continues to make on New York City overall. Our veteran business owners have an 80% higher success rate than non-veteran business owners, creating jobs and fueling the local and national economy. Our veteran advocates paved the way for the creation of the NYC Department of Veteran Services, which now acts as our local resource for the benefits and programs we have available to ensure our success. We have one of the largest populations of student veterans in the country using their GI-Bill in here in the city, with many attending Columbia, NYU, Fordham and the CUNY system.
- Ensure the general public is encouraged to attend and learn about us as well. Let them see us not as a “broken” population in need of charity work, but as the ones who will continue to answer the call for our nation’s success, when it needs us.

We didn’t get a win after twenty years of war, Mr. Mayor. You can give that to us here, with our community to guide you.

A Reminder To The Community

We are still moving forward with our Memorial Ruck March on May 24th and welcome you all to join us at noon at Cadman Plaza in Brooklyn. We encourage you all to challenge yourselves by packing your rucks (backpacks) with non-perishable goods, that we will then collect after the march to be delivered to our community members in shelters around the city.

[Register For The Ruck March Here](#)

Thank you to all of you who continue to support our work and our military-connected community as a whole in the five boroughs.

In Service,

Michael Matos

President

Five Borough Veterans

NYC pols demand party-pooper Mayor Mamdani throw ticker-tape parade for Artemis II astronauts: 'Make this happen!'

Story by Rich Calder • 3d • 3 min read

A bipartisan group of NYC pols are urging party-pooping Mayor Zohran Mamdani to throw a ticker-tape parade for the Artemis II astronauts — the first space-travelers that would ride down the Canyon of Heroes since the 1969 moon landing.

But NYC Council Speaker Julie Menin, Minority Leader David Carr and other pols fear Hizzoner will throw a wet blanket on the out-of-this-world celebration, given that the socialist mayor has already coldly banned the public from attending the Times Square ball drop celebrating America's 250th birthday on July 4.

The pols say the heroic Artemis II crew — and city residents of all political stripes — deserve to party.



NYC Council leaders are urging Mayor Mamdani to throw a ticker-tape parade celebrating Artemis II's historic mission to the Moon – one that would rival the bash the Big Apple threw for the famed Apollo 11 crew (pictured) in 1969. HUM Images/Universal Images Group via Getty Images

“In a world that has become increasingly polarized and often hostile, there are very few events that bring us all together to remind us of the joy of human existence and the beauty of the planet we all share,” wrote Menin (D-Manhattan), Carr (R-Staten Island), Deputy Speaker Nantasha Williams (D-Queens) and Councilman Frank Morano (R-Staten Island) in a letter to Mamdani on Friday.

NYC pols demand party-pooper Mayor Mamdani throw ticker-tape parade for Artemis II astronauts: 'Make this happen!'

By Rich Calder Published April 18, 2026, 11:05 a.m. ET

A bipartisan group of NYC pols are urging party-pooping Mayor Zohran Mamdani to throw a ticker-tape parade for the Artemis II astronauts — the first space-travelers that would ride down the Canyon of Heroes since the 1969 moon landing.

But NYC Council Speaker Julie Menin, Minority Leader David Carr and other pols fear Hizzoner will throw a wet blanket on the out-of-this-world celebration, given that the socialist mayor has already coldly banned the public from attending the Times Square ball drop celebrating America's 250th birthday on July 4.

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NYC Council leaders are urging Mayor Mamdani to throw a ticker-tape parade celebrating Artemis II's historic mission to the Moon — one that would rival the bash the Big Apple threw for the famed Apollo 11 crew (pictured) in 1969. HUM Images/Universal Images Group via Getty Images

“In a world that has become increasingly polarized and often hostile, there are very few events that bring us all together to remind us of the joy of human existence and the beauty of the planet we all share,” wrote Menin (D-Manhattan), Carr (R-Staten Island), Deputy Speaker Nantasha Williams (D-Queens) and Councilman Frank Morano (R-Staten Island) in a letter to Mamdani on Friday.

“The historic Artemis II mission was one of them.”

The city hasn't thrown a ticker-tape parade for astronauts since Mayor John Lindsay and 4 million New Yorkers welcomed Apollo 11's Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins on Aug. 13, 1969, three weeks after Armstrong and Aldrin became the first humans to walk on the moon.

The Artemis II mission marked humankind's first visit to the moon since 1972, and set a new distance record for manned space travel. It captured [never-before-seen images](#) of the far side of the moon, making the four crew members more than worthy of a motorcade in the Financial District, the council members insisted in the letter obtained by The Post.



The Artemis II crew, consisting of astronauts (from left to right) Reid Wiseman, Christina Koch, Jeremy Hansen, and Victor Glover, pose in front of the Orion spacecraft after their return to Earth. Bill Ingalls/UPI/Shutterstock



NYC Council Speaker Julie Menin, a Manhattan Democrat (in photo), Minority Leader David Carr (R-Staten Island), Deputy Speaker Nantasha Williams (D-Queens), and Councilman Frank Morano (R-Staten Island) wrote Mayor Mamdani on Friday asking him to host a parade celebrating the Artemis II crew. Matthew McDermott

"The Artemis II astronauts boldly went where no other humans had gone before, traveling 252,760 miles from Earth during their nine-day voyage around the moon — the farthest any humans have ever traveled," they wrote.

"But we believe their mission is not complete without a ticker-tape parade down the Canyon of Heroes.

"It would be appropriate that astronauts Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, Christina Koch and Jeremy Hansen follow in the famous footsteps" of the Apollo 11 crew.

"New Yorkers, indeed, all Americans, should have an opportunity to collectively celebrate this monumental achievement of ingenuity, daring and leadership, and to always remember what we can accomplish together as a nation.

"We ask that you take the necessary preparations to make this happen."

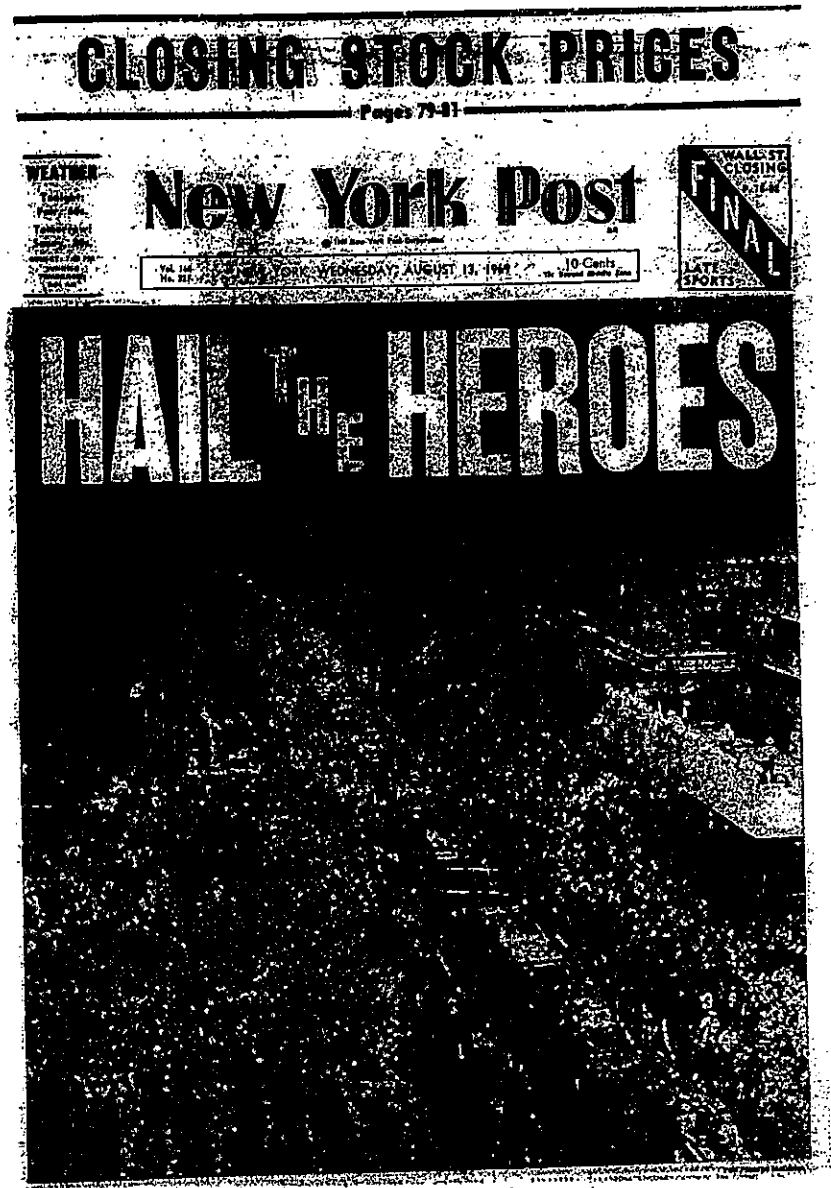
Council Minority Leader David Carr is among the letter's signatories. Paul Martinka

The Mayor's Office did not return messages.

Reps for the council members said Saturday that Mamdani had yet to respond to them.

The 1969 parade saw the three spacemen in a convertible ride through a blizzard of confetti from the Wall Street heliport through lower Manhattan to City Hall, where they were greeted by hundreds of thousands, bands, and two hook-and-ladder fire trucks carrying six US flags and a huge NASA banner, The Post reported then.

Lindsay greeted the trio and awarded them the City of New York's Gold Medal, which had only been given once before.



More than four million people attended the August 13, 1969 parade in NYC honoring Apollo 11's crew, The New York Post then reported.NY Post



Apollo 11 astronauts wave from open car after City Hall ceremony in 1969. Left to right: Michael Collins, Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong. In front of them in car are then-New York City's Mayor John Lindsay and then-United Nations Secretary General U Thant. Bettmann Archive

"This is one of New York's great moments," Lindsay said.



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Department of
Veterans' Services



TESTIMONY

Before the

New York City Council

Committee on Veterans

Oversight Hearing

April 23, 2026

Lt. G. Ricco Díaz

Retired Lieutenant, FDNY

27-Year U.S. Military Veteran

District Director & President, American Legion Riders

Bronx County, Post 620

Prepared for distribution to Council Members

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lt. G. Ricco Díaz, a retired Lieutenant of the Fire Department of the City of New York with 35 years of distinguished service as a Paramedic and Fire Officer, a 27-year United States military veteran, and the current District Director and President of the American Legion Riders for Bronx County, Post 620, submits the following testimony before the New York City Council Committee on Veterans. Lt. Díaz previously served as President of the FDNY Disaster Assistance Response Team with the American Red Cross. His career has spanned decades of frontline service to both the nation and the City of New York.

Lt. Díaz testifies regarding New York City's withdrawal from three major commemorative events of national significance: the 250th Anniversary of the United States, the 25th Anniversary of the September 11th attacks, and the long-promised ticker tape parade honoring veterans of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. The veteran and first responder community views these cancellations as a displacement of solemn national obligations in favor of FIFA World Cup preparations — signaling what Lt. Díaz characterizes as a troubling misalignment of civic priorities.

The stakes of this decision are deeply personal and broadly consequential. Lt. Díaz lost more than 60 friends and brothers among the 343 FDNY firefighters killed on September 11, 2001, with hundreds more lost in the years since to 9/11-related illnesses. Veterans, Gold Star families, and first responders feel that their sacrifices have been minimized. The testimony warns that sidelining service members in favor of a global sporting event risks sending the wrong message to the next generation about what this city values — that valor on the playing field matters more than valor on a battlefield.

Lt. Díaz respectfully urges the Council to take three decisive actions: (1) reinstate and schedule the ticker tape parade honoring veterans of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, (2) ensure full planning and support for the 250th Anniversary of the United States, and (3) affirm the City's unwavering commitment to properly commemorating the 25th Anniversary of September 11th. These actions, he argues, are essential to upholding New York City's legacy of resilience, patriotism, and remembrance.

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Submitted by: Lt. G. Ricco Díaz

Hearing: NYC Council Committee on Veterans — Oversight Hearing

Date: April 23, 2026

Good morning, Chairperson and members of the Council.

My name is Lt. G. Ricco Díaz. I served 27 years in the United States military and 35 years as a Paramedic and Fire Officer with the FDNY. I now serve as District Director and President of the American Legion Riders for Bronx County, Post 620, and previously as President of the FDNY Disaster Assistance Response Team with the American Red Cross.

My life has been dedicated to running toward the emergencies this city and this nation faced. Today, I am here because we are facing an emergency of a different kind — one of priorities and civic responsibility.

In recent weeks, New York City has withdrawn from several major commemorative events:

- The 250th Anniversary of the United States,
- The 25th Anniversary of the September 11th attacks, and
- The long promised ticker tape parade honoring veterans of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

These decisions have deeply affected the veteran community. For those of us who responded on September 11th, this is not symbolic. I lost more than 60 friends and brothers that day among the 343 firefighters we lost, and we have lost hundreds more since to 9/11 related illnesses. These anniversaries are sacred. They are part of this city's moral fabric.

We have been told that the upcoming FIFA World Cup has strained city resources. No one disputes the scale of that event. But many veterans, families, and first responders are

concerned that a global sporting event appears to have taken precedence over solemn national milestones and long promised recognition.

I understand resource management — I lived it in uniform and in emergency responses. But budgets reflect priorities, and priorities reflect values. When a city chooses what to elevate and what to postpone, it tells its people what matters.

Across New York City, veterans are frustrated and disappointed. Many feel their service — and the sacrifices of their families — have been minimized. Veterans, Gold Star families, and first responders are asking a simple question: If New York City can host the world, why can it not honor its own?

This is not only about veterans. It is about the message we send to the next generation. A city that celebrates athletes but sidelines its service members risks teaching young people that valor on the playing field matters more than valor on a battlefield. That cannot be the legacy of New York City.

I respectfully urge this Council to take decisive action:

1. Reinstate and schedule the ticker tape parade honoring OIF/OEF veterans.
2. Ensure full planning and support for the 250th Anniversary of the United States.
3. Affirm the City's commitment to properly commemorating the 25th Anniversary of September 11th.

In the fire service, we say ***Never Forget***. In the military, we say ***Leave No One Behind***. These are not slogans — they are principles.

New York City has always led this nation in resilience, patriotism, and remembrance. This is a moment to uphold that legacy. I urge this Council to act, restore these commitments, and ensure that this city continues to stand for those who have always stood for it.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Testimony to the NYC Council Veterans Committee

Roman Baca | Exit 12 Dance Company | April 23, 2026

My testimony today rests on two assumptions: first, that politics is about bringing people together and earning the broadest possible constituent support for shared initiatives; and second, that veterans are vital to the city of New York.

My name is Roman Baca, a US Marine Iraq War Veteran and Co-Founder of Exit12 Dance Company. I have been working in veterans' art and recovery as well as advocacy in New York since leaving the Corps. I have worked and partnered with organizations such as Mission Continues, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, and several arts organizations, and I lead my own nonprofit, Exit 12 Dance Company. My work has extended internationally as in the UK I have collaborated with the Ministry of Defence and the Royal British Legion on arts and recovery programs within the military community. In the United States, we have worked extensively within VA facilities, Vet Centers, and other organizations serving veterans and the broader military community.

I have two items to bring before you today.

1. The Scope and Framing of This Session

This session is focused on post-9/11 veterans. While I understand the intent, the title alone reinforces the segmentation and exclusion that has contributed to the decline in veteran wellness, community spaces, and the overall number of veterans choosing to live or remain in New York City.

I have attended these council meetings since 2024, and attendance has rarely exceeded 30 to 40 people. By contrast, meetings focused on arts and culture or health and sanitation are standing room only. Politics works when constituents are engaged and veterans are not absent from New York City. At Columbia, Fordham, NYU, and other area universities, veterans' groups are active and engaged. The Harbor VA System and the James J. Peters VA Medical Center in the Bronx are filled with veterans seeking medical care, personal and professional guidance, and community. Many of New York's leading employers have veterans' immersion programs, hiring initiatives, or employee resource groups dedicated to veterans. Preference hiring programs, job fairs, cultural events, and public service pathways are all available. So why, with all of this in place, are fewer veterans engaging in advocacy, and why are more veterans leaving New York City?

In my meetings, advocacy efforts, and research, I have consistently encountered division and segmentation of the veteran community rather than efforts to unite it around shared purpose and service. This meeting, and the upcoming ticker-tape parade turned ruck march serve to further segment. It seemingly leaves out veterans of other eras and service, as well as those who might not be physically or mentally able to throw on a pack and walk a distance. We can continue to subdivide indefinitely by gender, race, or service in Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, OEF, OIF, post-9/11, and soon, Iran War veterans. But segmentation weakens us.

I urge this council, the Department of Veterans' Services, and NYC organizations to instead pursue strategies that attract veterans to move to — or remain in — this city. At Exit 12 Dance Company, we work with the military-connected community, a term that is more inclusive than any era-based label. It encompasses active-duty service members, veterans of all discharge statuses, military family members, children, caregivers, and supporters. We include family members and caregivers intentionally: they are often a veteran's most effective advocates when veterans cannot advocate for themselves.

2. The Impact of VA Workforce Reductions

As this council may be aware, the Department of Veterans Affairs is in the process of eliminating up to 83,000 positions by the end of 2025, including approximately 35,000 of which are currently vacant. Having worked within the VA system across the country, I want to offer a ground-level picture of what these cuts mean in practice.

Many people think of the VA as a medical system. What is less understood is that for many veterans, the VA is also their primary source of community. At the Manhattan VA, veterans recently gathered for an arts day featuring songs, poetry, and dance. At the Bronx VA, a new coffee shop is being built to give a thriving community a place to gather. At the Brooklyn VA, veterans regularly fill the clubhouse sharing coffee, laughter, and each other's company. This kind of peer-to-peer connection is essential to reducing isolation and depression in our population.

But these spaces and programs are now at risk. The VA facilities in New York City have lost arts therapists, community organizers, and clinicians and those positions are not being refilled. The remaining staff are stretched beyond capacity, and services are contracting. Nonprofits, including Exit 12, are stepping in to fill the gap with vital community programming. But many of us are struggling to secure adequate funding to sustain the services we are providing.

I respectfully call on this council to meet with us to discuss discretionary funding that would allow organizations like Exit 12 to continue supporting the physical and mental health of New York City's veterans.

You have the opportunity to be the council members who grow this community, empower our veterans, and bring them together in shared purpose. For that, I thank you in advance.

Good afternoon, Chairman and members of the Council.

My name is Douglas Brewster. I am a proud veteran and native New Yorker who was spurred to join the Army after the attacks on 9/11, and I am here to advocate and express my support for the veterans' programs that serve NYC. These programs provide critical support, including job readiness training, mentorship, and of course, housing.

The reality of economics today has made housing of extreme importance; many veterans returning to NYC after their service are not able to afford the neighborhoods they grew up in or find jobs that would allow them to provide for them and their families here. To many born here, (like myself) New York City is the only place I feel at home. Veterans are a valuable resource for NYC that contributes both to the economy and community in a positive manner.

I have worked for The Jericho Project for 8 years; I have seen firsthand how access to housing and structured programs can reduce isolation, improve mental health, and create pathways to employment. For many veterans transitioning back to civilian life, these services can be essential.

I thank the Council for all your support- it is needed now more than ever. Recent cuts to the VA have caused backlogs, overworked the remaining case managers, and have inconvenienced many veterans in the NYC area. The new generation of veterans returning home will be facing a new a difficult set of challenges. AI is changing the job market; unaffordability is changing the housing market. For every dollar spent on prevention and support services can reduce the cost related to homelessness, unemployment, substance abuse, and emergency services in the future.

I respectfully ask the Council to continue funding veterans' programs and prioritize decisions that strengthen our community infrastructure to ensure no veteran is left behind.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today, and for your consideration to this matter.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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Address: 1 Centre St Ny Ny

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Address: Derek Bray

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I represent: VETERAN ADVOCACY PROJECT
Address: 1 Liberty

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I represent: Myself + The Lencho Project
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I represent: Ext 12

Address: _____

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I represent: myself

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Name: Camille Okonkwo (PLEASE PRINT)

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Name: RICARDO GARCIA

Address: [REDACTED] Bronx NY

I represent: AMERICAN Legion

Address: 1570 57th St. Astoria

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Address: _____

I represent: Five Borough Veterans

Address: _____

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I represent: Gallup NYC

Address: Howard Beach, Queens

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I represent: _____

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Name: LT G. RIECO DIAZ

Address: 1940 HAIGHT AVE Bx, NY 10461

I represent: AMERICAN Legion RIDERS

Address: SAME

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Address: 351 W. 24TH St.

I represent: Gallop NYC

Address: Sunrise Stable Linden Blvd.
Howard Beach NY



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Name: Mike Munoz

Address: _____ 10019

I represent: American Legion Post 917

Address: _____

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Address: 257 W. 29th St

I represent: Veterans Justice Project

Address: _____

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I represent: HOPE FOR THE WARRIORS

Address: UNION

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Name: Joseph Wein

Address: _____ Jersey City

I represent: Myself

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