

Bills Introduced On Veterans' Issues

State legislators and veterans gathered at the Capitol to discuss various bills on veterans issues. The goal they say is to give our heroes in uniform the welcome home they deserve.

State Senator Greg Ball of the 40th District said, "Our veterans are the best in this country and the best in New York State, and we have to do everything we can to protect them."

That's why the state senator is looking to make sure veterans get the support system they need when they come home, from health care to education. There was also a big push for a law to benefit service disabled veteran owned small businesses. Mathew Tully, a disabled vet who started the law firm Tully Rinckey, said when soldiers return home and try to start their own business, they don't have a fair chance to get any contracts with the state.

Mathew Tully of the Tully Rinckey Law Firm said, "Small businesses are one of the main driving forces of our economy, and helping veterans who have received leadership training and management training from the government, to then go become entrepreneurs is a benefit for everyone."

Vietnam veteran Ron said, "We can't live without work. You have to have work. So somebody has to help us, but we need help. If the work isn't available we can't do it."

Another topic on Monday's agenda was what to do about protests at military funerals. Earlier this month, the Supreme Court ruled the Westboro Baptist Church was exercising its first amendment right to mount anti-gay protests outside military funerals.

Vietnam veteran Charles Miller said, "It's a disgrace to mock someone who gave their life for their country. I realize we have freedom of speech. That's why we're a free society, but to just go there and to make bad relationships with young men and women who died for their country. I think it's horrible."

Now, Senator Ball is pushing for legislation to create a 500 foot buffer zone outside of soldiers funerals.

Senator Ball said, "Because of public safety we have the right to enforce those laws and of course for common decency we should have been doing this for quite some time."

And an overriding message of the day: You don't have to honor the war, to honor the warrior.