

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

**Steve Stern**

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**PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**8 Properties to Be Converted to Veterans Housing Under Legislator Steve Stern's  
"Housing Our Homeless Heroes Act"**

County Executive Steve Bellone, Presiding Officer Duwayne Gregory and Legislator Steve Stern announce rehabilitation of properties to house homeless veterans



Pictured: Ruth McDade, Association for Mental Health and Wellness, County Executive Steve Bellone, Legislator Steve Stern, Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory, Rick Wertheim, of Housing for the United Way)

**(Copiague, NY – July 22, 2015)** – Suffolk County Legislator Steve Stern (D-Huntington) 16<sup>th</sup> L.D., Chairman of the Veterans and Seniors Committee, County Executive Steve Bellone and Presiding Officer Duwayne Gregory announced today that under Legislator Stern's "Housing Our Homeless Heroes Act," Suffolk County proposes to transfer eight tax-defaulted properties to non-profit agencies to rehabilitate the home to create affordable housing for veterans who are homeless or severely at risk of becoming homeless.

The Housing our Homeless Heroes Act, signed into law by County Executive Bellone just days before Christmas, permits the transfer of tax-defaulted parcels directly to qualified non-profits for the purposes of constructing homes to assist veterans with obtaining safe, secure and supported housing.

“No soldier who has ever worn the uniform of our great nation and gone off to protect the ground we stand on should ever have to come to sleep on it,” Legislator Stern said. “A home is much more than four walls and a roof. It is a symbol of dignity and mark of hope that our veterans need and deserve. I thank all of our partners within government and the non-profit sector for working together so diligently to implement the ‘Housing Our Homeless Heroes Act’ so that we may serve those who have served all of us.”

Included in the housing proposal are two parcels in Central Islip to be transferred to the Concern for Independent Living for the construction of three single-family homes. In addition, United Veterans Beacon House has proposed to create two single-family units by rehabilitating an existing house on a parcel in Copiague and will build one single-family unit on a parcel in Yaphank. The Association for Mental Health and Wellness also proposes to build a new four-bedroom house for three senior disabled veterans and a live-in house manager on two parcels in Mastic; rehabilitate a house in Riverhead for one veteran family; and build a new set of four single room occupancies for veterans on a parcel in Medford.

The units will all provide rental housing overseen and managed by the non-profit organizations.

Veterans who rent the new units will also be provided with support services such as employment training and opportunities; family counseling; primary and mental health care; disability management and health care coordination; family counseling; financial training and substance abuse services.

Funding for the construction will be provided in part from the New York State Homeless Housing Assistance Program and United States Department of Housing and Urban Development HOME Investment Partnerships Program funding.

Participating veterans must have incomes of no more than 80% of the HUD established median income for Nassau-Suffolk, adjusted for family size, and may be assisted through the use of HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program vouchers. The rent of the units will not exceed the HUD established fair market rent for Nassau-Suffolk based upon bedroom size.

“It is a tragedy for any of our military heroes to return home and not have a place to live on the very land they fought to protect,” Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone said. “As the county with the largest veteran population in New York State, it is our obligation to make sure our military heroes have the services, support and basic necessities they need. I thank Legislator Steve Stern, the Concern for Independent Living, United Veterans Beacon House and the Association for Mental Health and Wellness for working with the County to help create housing opportunities to end veteran homelessness in Suffolk County.”

“No one who put his or her life on the line for our country should be sleeping on our streets,” said Suffolk County Legislature Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory. “Suffolk County is home to the highest population of veterans in the state, and I commend Legislator Stern for introducing this much-needed bill, which will provide quality housing to heroes facing homelessness.”

“We at the United Veterans Beacon House are excited to be part of this new program that Suffolk County has created to place veterans into safe affordable housing,” said Frank Amalfitano, President and CEO of United Veterans Beacon House. “We thank Executive Steve Bellone for allowing us to be part of this ground breaking legislation.”

“As an agency committed to ensuring empowering people to overcome the impact of health and mental health disabilities, it is our intent to devote these houses to assist male and female veterans who have been affected by

service-connected and post-service transition mental health challenges,” said Michael Stoltz, Chief Executive Officer of the Association for Mental Health and Wellness. “I thank Suffolk County for partnering with our organization to further assist us in supporting our veterans.”

“I applaud County Executive Bellone, Legislator Stern and the entire Suffolk County Legislature for making these sites available to non-profits who serve veterans,” said Ralph Fasano, Executive Director of Concern for Independent Living. “It allows us to secure State and Federal funding which will result in high quality housing aimed at providing homes for the men and woman who faithfully served our country.”