

Governor Cuomo Announces Rededication of New York State Vietnam Memorial Gallery

Albany, NY (April 15, 2013)

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced the reopening of the New York State Vietnam Memorial Gallery in the Robert Abrams Building for Law and Justice. The gallery, which has been closed since 2009, is being opened in conjunction with the state's partnership with the U.S. Department of Defense's commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the United States' military involvement in Vietnam. The exhibition is titled "Welcome Home, The 50-Year Commemoration of the Vietnam War, 1962-1975." The gallery will be open 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. weekdays and is free to the public.

"Today we commemorate and thank the veterans, many of which were New Yorkers, who served our nation in Vietnam, as well as honor the memory of the men and women who lost their lives fighting in this war," said Governor Cuomo. "By rededicating this gallery, we can once again thank the men and women that served our nation in Vietnam while also help educate the younger generation about this period in our nation's history."

"Governor Cuomo and I are pleased to carry on the Empire State's long tradition of honoring its veterans and to be a partner with Washington in paying tribute to the New Yorkers who served in Southeast Asia when our nation called upon them," said Lieutenant Governor Robert Duffy. "We believe the rededication of the Vietnam Memorial Gallery is an excellent way to thank those men and women and their families for all the sacrifices they made, and we invite all who come to New York's capital to visit this very special place."

"As we rededicate the gallery, I join Governor Cuomo in asking all New Yorkers to honor the memory of the men and women who served their country in Vietnam," Commissioner Destito said. "The state's Vietnam Memorial Gallery is a place where people can go to learn about our state's involvement in the Vietnam War and solemnly reflect on the sacrifices made by those who were killed or declared missing in action."

"The Department of Defense Vietnam War Commemoration office is extremely proud to welcome The State of New York as a Commemorative Partner. We are grateful to Governor Andrew Cuomo for his leadership and to the other state officials for their help in assisting a grateful nation in thanking and honoring our Vietnam Veterans and their loved ones," said Lieutenant General Mick Kicklighter, USA, Retired, the director of the United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration.

"Governor Cuomo is committed to working with veterans and their families to expand opportunities and recognize the important role these individuals play in our state. The reopening of this gallery is one of many examples of his respect and honor for those who serve," New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs Director Colonel Eric J. Hesse, USA, Retired, said. "It is an honor and a privilege to be a part of this gallery, which will once again provide a place of reflection for those who so valiantly served our state and our country during the Vietnam War and an excellent educational resource for our community."

Representatives from state, federal, and local veterans' groups were on hand for the reopening ceremony.

The New York State Vietnam Memorial honors the military service of New York State residents who served their country in Southeast Asia. The memorial was created by legislation in 1981 and was officially dedicated on May 26, 1984 by Governor Mario Cuomo and was one of the first such state efforts in the nation. The memorial includes a courtyard with a state honor roll on four bronze panels and an exhibition gallery.

It was created to be a "living memorial" with an exhibition gallery and resource center designed "to foster increased public understanding and discussion of the Vietnam War and its aftermath." Its mandate was to present changing exhibitions, educational programs, special events, and interaction with other agencies and veterans' organizations.

Items that will be on display include:

- A U.S. Navy pea coat and cap worn by Robert Wurster of Rensselaer while serving as a signalman aboard the USS Beatty and the USS Little Rock from 1967 to 1973. (Property of the New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs, New York State Military Museum.)
- A limited edition, signed reproduction print of the 2002 painting "Night Vision" by artist Jamie Wyeth, son of artist Andrew Wyeth and grandson of illustrator N.C. Wyeth. "Night Vision" was painted by Wyeth while wearing night vision goggles akin to those worn by soldiers in the Vietnam War. The intense greens and yellows produced by the goggles provide a dramatic backdrop for the image of a soldier. The painting was done in 2002 to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund.
- An M1 helmet that was being worn by Capt. Dennis Finnegan of Lynbrook, Long Island when it was pierced by a bullet during combat on May 10, 1967. Finnegan served three tours of duty with the 101st Airborne Division before he was killed in a helicopter crash in 1972. (Property of the New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs, New York State Military Museum.)
- "P38" can opener, nicknamed "P38" because it supposedly took 38 punctures to open one can. These handy devices were included in cases of rations. Soldiers sometimes attached them to their dog tag chains.

An online link to information about the gallery can be found at

<http://www.ogs.ny.gov/ESP/CT/Memorials/Vietnam.asp>

To learn more about the commemoration, find events in your area or have your community, business or organization become a Commemorative Partner please visit

<http://www.vietnamwar50th.com>

The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration Partner Program to honor Vietnam veterans and their families will last for 13 years, recognizing the country's involvement in the conflict in Vietnam from 1962 when American forces first engaged in major combat to 1975 when the last American soldier left. Throughout the 13-year period New York State will pay tribute to its veterans by educating the public about the life of an American soldier serving in Vietnam through a display of Vietnam War era artifacts in the gallery.