

GARY FLAHERTY
DIRECTOR

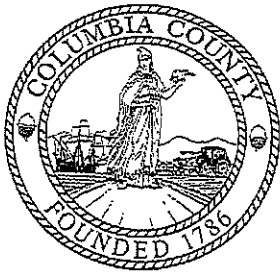
COLUMBIA COUNTY
VETERANS' SERVICE AGENCY
401 STATE STREET
HUDSON, NEW YORK 12534
TELEPHONE (518) 828-3610

DRAFT OF COMMENTS FOR TESTIMONY

GOOD MORNING. MY NAME IS GARY FLAHERTY AND I AM THE DIRECTOR OF VETERANS' SERVICES FOR COLUMBIA COUNTY. IT IS AN HONOR TO BE ASKED TO PROVIDE INPUT ON ISSUES THAT FACE OUR VETERANS DURING THESE MOST UNUSUAL TIMES.

WHILE OUR VETERANS WITH BOTH PHYSICAL AND MENTAL ISSUES HAVE DIFFICULTY, THESE HAVE BEEN EVEN MORE SO THESE PAST MONTHS OF COVID. AS YOU MIGHT IMAGINE, MANY OF OUR VETERANS FALL IN THE HIGH VUNABLE CATEGORY NOT ONLY BY AGE BUT MEDICAL CONDITIONS. MANY OF OUR VIETNAM VETERANS HAVE CHRONIC MEDICAL CONDITONS DIRECTLY RELATED TO EXPOSURE TO AGENT ORANGE, IE NUMEROUS CANCERS, DIABETES, HEART ETC.

OF EQUAL IMPORTANCE AND MAY BE EVEN MORE SO IS THE LARGE NUMBER OF VETERANS THAT SUFFER FROM WAR EXPERIENCES AND IN PARTICULAR POST TRAMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD). THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERE EPISODES OF THIS MANIFESTING ITSELF DURING THE COVID CRISIS. IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE COUNTY VSO



**COLUMBIA COUNTY
VETERANS' SERVICE AGENCY**

401 STATE STREET
HUDSON, NEW YORK 12534
TELEPHONE (518) 828-3610

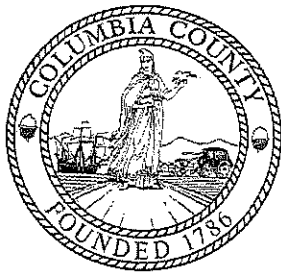
GARY FLAHERTY
DIRECTOR

ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT, HE RELAYED MANY INSTANCES OF SUICIDES AND ATTEMPTED SUICIDES DUE TO ISOLATION AND MORAL INJURIES.

WE HAVE NOT HAD THE PROBLEM IN COLUMBIA COUNTY MAINLY DO TO THE SUPPORT BASE WE HAVE USING THE JOSEPH DWYER PROGRAM. DURING THIS TIME WE HAVE STAYED ENGAGED WITH OUR VETERANS VIA THE INTERNET, PHONE AND MAIL. EVERY SUNDAY SINCE THIS BEGAN, THE UNDERSIGNED DEDICATES SUNDAY TO CALLING NOT ONLY VETERANS, BUT WIDOWS AND FAMILIES. TO DATE 467 CALLS WERE MADE WITH ONLY ONE VETERAN WHO RELAYED HE HAD THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE AND TWO DOMESTIC VIOLENT CASES. IN EVERY SITUATION, THEY WERE RESOLVED EARLY ON.

THE OTHER VETERANS POPULATION THAT DOES NOT GET MUCH ATTENTION IS MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA. COLUMBIA COUNTY BEING A SMALL COUNTY, I AM CURRENTLY HANDLING 5 FEMALE AND 2 MALE MST CASES.

HAVING SAID THIS, IT IS ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL THAT THE FUNDING FOR VETERANS' PROGRAMS BE CONTINUED NOT ONLY THE NORMAL FUNDING



**COLUMBIA COUNTY
VETERANS' SERVICE AGENCY**

401 STATE STREET
HUDSON, NEW YORK 12534
TELEPHONE (518) 828-3610

GARY FLAHERTY
DIRECTOR

**TO THE COUNTIES BUT THE PFC JOSEPH P. DWYER
PROGRAM AS WELL.**

**FINALLY, I WOULD LIKE TO STATE ON BEHALF OF
ALL OF OUR VETERANS AND VETERANS
ADVOCATES THAT IT IS DISHEARTENING TO
BELIEVE WE ARE CONSIDERED AS NON ESSENTIAL.
TAKING CARE OF VETERANS IS NOT ONLY
ESSENTIAL; BUT CRITICAL.**

**AGAIN, I THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY AND
LOOK FORWARD TO ANSWERING ANY QUESTIONS.**

Testimony will be taken only upon approval by the Committee Chairs. Individuals who have been invited to present testimony at the public hearing on the Impacts of COVID-19 on New York's Veterans are requested to complete this reply form as soon as possible and e-mail a copy of planned testimony. Individuals invited to participate will be notified within 48 hours of the hearing. All replies and draft testimony submissions must be e-mailed to:

Nic Rangel, Senior Counsel
Senate Committee on Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs
Email: Rangel@nysenate.gov
Phone: 518-455-7925

&
Joanne Martin, Principal Analyst
Assembly Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Email: martinj@nyassembly.gov
Phone: (518) 455-4363

I have been invited to make a public statement at the hearing. My statement will be limited to five of minutes, and I will answer any questions which may arise.

I will address my remarks to the following subjects:

I do not plan to attend the above hearing.

I would like to be added to the Committee mailing list for notices and reports.

I would like to be removed from the Committee mailing list.

I will require assistance and/or handicapped accessibility information. **Please specify the type of assistance required:** _____

ALL INFORMATION BELOW MUST BE COMPLETED:

NAME: GARY FLAHERTY

TITLE: DIRECTOR - COLUMBIA COUNTY VETERANS' SERVICES

ORGANIZATION: COLUMBIA COUNTY

ADDRESS: 389 FAIRVIEW AVE, HUDSON, NY 12534

E-MAIL: GARY.FLAHERTY@COLUMBIACOUNTY.NY.COM

TELEPHONE: 518) 828-3610 / CELL: 518) 610-0941