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NY offers tax relief to disabled veterans



Tom Giorgi, pictured at his home in Rye Brook on Oct. 27, is a Vietnam vet eligible for a new tax exemption for fully disabled military veterans in New York State. Giorgi was shot in the back in 1966 while serving, and sustained further injuries when the vehicle that he was being evacuated in came under attack. He says that the tax exemption would greatly benefit him and his wife. PHOTOS BY SETH HARRISON/THE JOURNAL NEWS

State made exemption optional for each school district, county and municipality to offer

Chris McKenna
New York State Team | USA TODAY NETWORK

RYE BROOK — Tom Giorgi was 21 and searching an enemy camp with his infantry unit in Vietnam when a sniper's bullet ripped through him, leaving him writhing in hostile territory he was lucky to escape that day in 1966.

His ordeal had not ended, though: the North Vietnamese blew up the vehicle that was evacuating him, and Giorgi leapt from the flames with burns over much of his body.

He left the Vietnam War with two Purple Hearts and went on to raise a family in Westchester County while working as a New York City paramedic for 20 years. But the enduring damage from his wounds ultimately led the government to classify him with its highest level of service-related impairment: permanent and total disability.



Photos and other items in Giorgi's home.

Sixty years after his brush with death, that vestige of Giorgi's war experience now qualifies him for a robust new benefit that New York is making available.

See RELIEF, Page 3A

Hochul weighs first-in-nation food safety bill

Emily Barnes
New York State Team | USA TODAY NETWORK

Pressure from both sides of the discussion around a food safety bill currently sitting on New York Gov. Kathy Hochul's desk is ramping up as the deadline to make a decision draws nearer.

A piece of legislation introduced by Assemblymember Anna Kelles, a Southern Tier Democrat, and Sen. Brian Kavanagh, a Lower Manhattan Democrat, the Food Safety and Chemical Disclosure Act would immediately ban three additives and expand state-level oversight of food substances designated as "Generally Recognized as Safe," or GRAS, by the federal Food and Drug Administration.

The back and forth began earlier this year when a study conducted by Policy Navigation Group and released by the Food Ingredient Safety Coalition suggested the new regulations could cause New Yorkers to spend an additional $620 on groceries per year.

State lawmakers and policy groups for the passage of the bill have since refuted that number, but some small business owners and policy groups advocating against the legislation are still concerned it would increase costs for both consumers and businesses in New York.

The bill was delivered to the governor on Nov. 13, which means Hochul has until Nov. 25 — 10 days after it's been delivered excluding Sundays — to either sign or veto it.

Here's the latest on the Food Safety and Chemical Disclosure Act.

Which additives are banned through this legislation?

Three additives — FD&C Red 3, potassium bromate and propylparaben — would no longer be allowed in food produced or sold in New York, if the bill is signed by Hochul.

Red 3 is found in products such as maraschino cherries, sprinkles, frostings and breakfast cereals. White bread, rolls and pizza crusts sometimes contain potassium bromate and propylparaben can be found in tortillas, muffins, processed vegetable-based spreads and fruit-based fillings.

The legislation would also require companies to produce and submit reports on any food ingredients they use that they refer to as GRAS and why they believe the ingredients are safe, which the state would then make public.

It's the first of its kind in the country and was passed by both the state Senate and Assembly earlier in April.

New report says Policy Navigation Group numbers 'grossly overstate' the cost of the bill

In a recent analysis conducted by Tufts University and the Center for Science in the Public Interest

See BILL, Page 2A

Westchester reveals plan to investigate election ballot mess

Chris McKenna
New York State Team | USA TODAY NETWORK

An inquiry into Westchester County's Election Day debacle could start up next month with an appointed panel holding webcast hearings to pinpoint why voting machines couldn't read ballots and how to prevent a recurrence.

In an exclusive interview with the USA TODAY Network, County Executive Ken Jenkins laid out his initial plans for the investigation he vowed after poll stations across Westchester faced the same problem on Nov. 3. Some 180,000 ballots were set aside that day due to an apparent programming oversight, then fed into scanners to be tallied over the next three days after the problem was corrected.

The probe will begin once the final election results are certified by the county Board of Elections, which indicated as of Thursday, Nov. 19 that it was still counting mailed ballots and voting affidavits.

See MESS, Page 2A



The Business Council of New York State's director of government affairs Kyle Wallach, left, and Albany small business owner Jordan Cambron, right, called on Gov. Kathy Hochul to veto the Food Safety and Chemical Disclosure Act on Nov. 19.
EMILY BARNES / USA TODAY NETWORK-NEW YORK

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