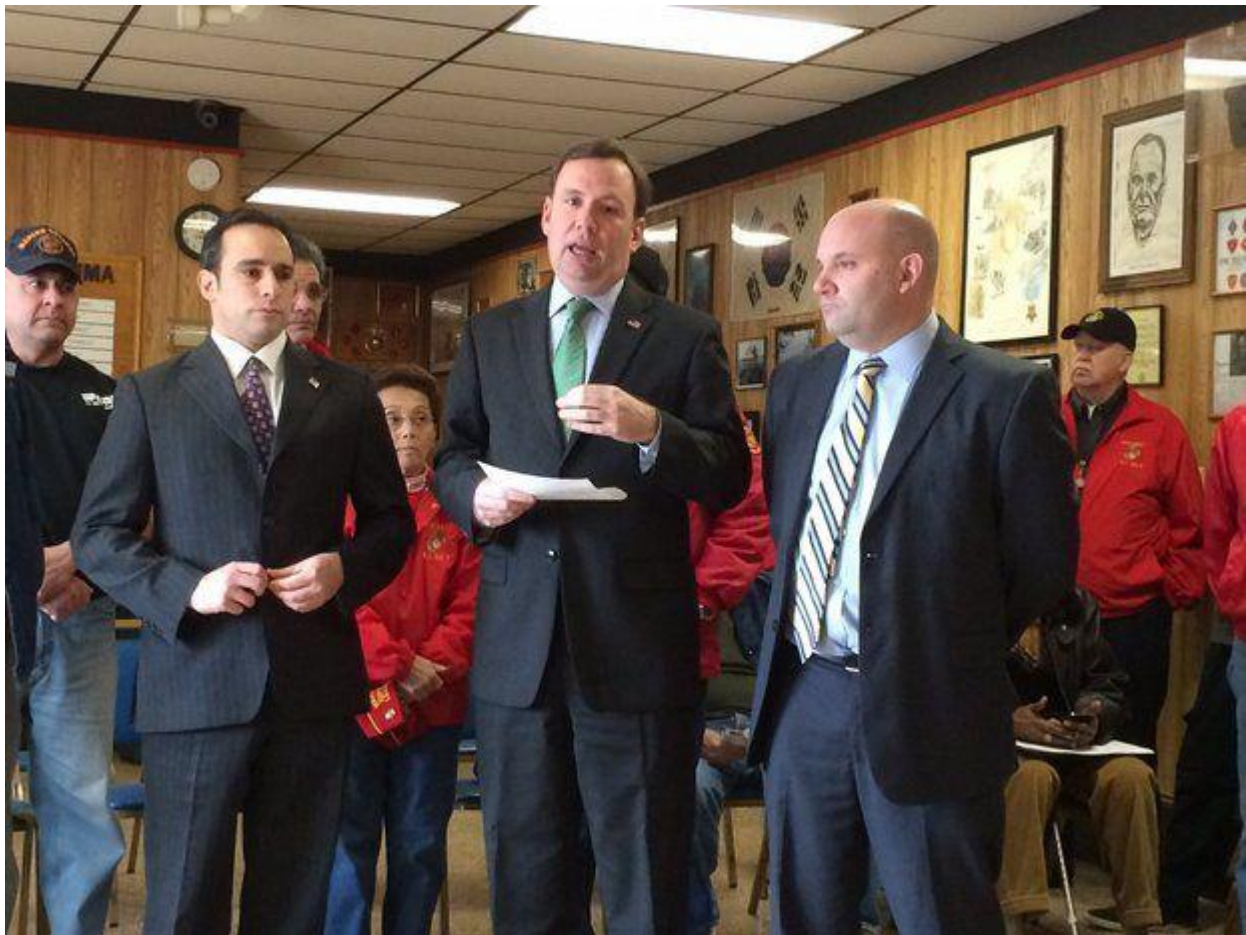


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## Staten Island

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# Staten Island Council delegation takes baton from Cusick on veteran's tax exemption



Councilman Vincent Ignizio, Assemblyman Michael Cusick, and Councilman Steven Matteo call for the passage of a bill to give veteran's more money back through their property tax exemptions. *(Staten Island Advance/Jillian Jorgensen)*

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STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. -- After the state took action to make it possible, Staten Island's City Council delegation will push the city to close a loophole in a property tax exemption for veterans, they announced Friday.

Veterans receive an exemption on their property taxes already -- but they're forced to pay back a portion of it to fund the city's schools tax. But a state law, pushed by Assemblyman Michael Cusick (D-Mid-Island), will now allow municipalities around the state to apply the exemption to schools' part of the property tax bill, too.

"We're handing the baton off to the Council delegation," Cusick said at a press conference at the Marine Corps League in Sunnyside. "And it's up to Vinny Ignizio to be the anchor man and get it over the finish line."

The entire delegation -- Ignizio (R-South Shore), Councilman Steven Matteo (R-Mid-Island) and Councilwoman Debi Rose (D-North Shore) support the legislation, which they will introduce together.

The amount veterans will see back will differ depending on their home values, Cusick said, but any little bit helps.

"That's what we're here to do -- to make life easier for the men and women who have sacrificed their lives, who have sacrificed many things in their families, for our country, for our way of life," he said.

Ignizio said property taxes and taxes in general pose a burden to veterans living here and throughout the city.

"All we're trying to do here is reduce the burden on homeowners so that they can maintain their current home and stay in the city of New York," Ignizio said. "That should be desired by everyone."

The exemption applied to the schools portion of taxes "should have been there in the first place," Ignizio added.

He expected the bill to get a positive reception in the Council.

"It's up to us in the city to work with the administration and the Speaker's office to say, 'This is something that is hurting people in the city of New York, who served our country, who in very large measure are seniors on a fixed income,'" Ignizio said. "This is a way we can help them remain in New York City. I think that's a message that will play well in the Council and in the de Blasio administration."

In addition to taxes, veterans also have to contend with rising food and gas prices, Matteo said.

"The sacrifice of the brave men and women of the armed forces can't be understated, and the least we can do is make sure their property tax burden is eased a little bit," he said.

Ms. Rose, who did not attend the press conference, expressed her support in a statement.

"While it is incredibly important to fund our schools -- an issue I am also very committed to -- I do not believe that this will have a huge fiscal impact on our local budget, but in the personal lives of the effected veterans, it can make a huge difference in their day to day lives," she said.

Dennis McLoone, county commander of the American Legion, applauded the elected officials.

"Anything they can do to help us, they step up right away," he said.