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**Andrew M. Cuomo** - Governor

## Governor Cuomo Encourages Veterans to Apply for New Lifetime Liberty Pass

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*Pass Provides Discounted Access to New York State Parks, Campgrounds, Boat Launches, Historic Sites and More*

Albany, NY (May 20, 2014)

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today encouraged New York State Veterans with disabilities to apply for the new Lifetime Liberty Pass, which permits qualified disabled Veterans discounted use of state parks, historic sites, and recreational facilities operated by the Office Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (State Parks) and the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The launch of the Liberty Pass stems from the Governor's Veteran's Summit last March to discuss ways in which New York can improve services to Veterans and military families and supports the state's efforts to improve and celebrate its many outdoor recreational opportunities as we head into the summer tourism season.

"New York's disabled veterans put their lives on the line for our state and nation, and providing them with lifetime access to our parks is one small way we can continue to extend our gratitude for their service," Governor Cuomo said. "As we approach this Memorial Day weekend and prepare for the summer park season, I encourage all qualified veterans to take advantage of this new opportunity."

"Governor Cuomo is helping to recognize and assist New York's Veterans in a multitude of ways," State Parks Commissioner Rose Harvey said. "I hope that the Lifetime Liberty Pass is one benefit that will bring Veterans with disabilities particular enjoyment and happy memories as they visit our park system with their families and friends."

"New York has a wide array of natural resources that is meant to be enjoyed and admired by all," DEC Commissioner Martens said. "The new Lifetime Liberty Pass removes barriers for a key population, our valued Veterans with disabilities, making it even more affordable for a lifetime. This enhanced value is another example of how the Cuomo Administration is improving services to Veterans while promoting outdoor recreational opportunities."

Governor Cuomo announced the new Lifetime Liberty Pass at his Veteran's Summit earlier this year. The Lifetime Liberty Pass benefits includes free vehicle entry to State Parks and DEC-operated day-use areas, as well as numerous State boat launch sites, historic sites, arboretums and park preserves; free golf at 28 State Park golf courses; free swimming pool entrance at 36 State Park pools, and discounted camping and cabin rentals at all 119 State Park and DEC campgrounds. Numerous historic sites and parks in the State Park system commemorate the service of Veterans.

To qualify for the pass, the Veteran must provide State Parks with written certification from the United States Veterans Administration or the New York State Division of Veterans Affairs that the applicant is a Veteran with a 40% or greater service connected disability. Visit the State Parks website for more information and an application: <http://nysparks.com/admission/lifetime-liberty-pass.aspx>.

New York State Veterans with disabilities who currently hold a valid Access Pass may continue to use their pass for its duration. Prior to expiration, the pass-holder will only need to send in a new picture and a copy of their valid NYS driver's license or non-driver ID. If the pass holder wishes to have the Lifetime Liberty Pass sooner, they will need to send in their current pass before the new pass can be issued.

Governor Cuomo's Veteran's Summit focused on creating a comprehensive approach to improving services to Veterans and military families in New York, including the areas of affordable housing, employment, education, benefits, and mental health. It included the participation of leaders from 36 Veterans groups, 11 representatives from military bases in New York, 28 administrators from educational institutions, and 18 executives from private businesses. The Lifetime Liberty Pass is one of multiple initiatives the Governor announced that will provide Veterans and military families greater access to affordable housing, employment, and educational opportunities throughout the state.