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## **Citizens Preparedness**

### **Emergency Preparedness Class**

**Three Village, NY.com, July 18, 2025 ::**

Take a step to being more prepared in the event of an emergency! This training is taught by a member of the New York National Guard and the New York State Citizen Preparedness Corps. Hosted by Emma Clark Library.

Wednesday, August 6, 7:00 - 8:00pm. Open to all Suffolk County residents. Click here to register.

<https://patch.com/new-york/threevillage/calendar/event/20250806/272de5ec-bcee-4d2f-b735-017548c5b797/emergency-preparedness-class>

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## **DOCCS Support**

## **Comptrollers Office reports DOCCS earning most overtime pay across state agencies**

**WHAM, July 20, 2025::**

Rochester, N.Y. (WHAM) - A recent report by the state comptroller's office said state employees worked nearly 24.5 million hours in overtime last year.

The top agency was the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision.

In April 13WHAM spoke with Senator Dan Stec about DOCCS. He said, "I've been in the legislature now for my 13th year, I represent more correctional facilities than any other legislator."

According to the report, DOCCS made up only 9% of state employees but earned 33% of the overtime pay last year.

Accounting nearly \$445 million in overtime pay in 2024.

The Comptroller's Office said, a smaller pool of correctional staff is working substantially more overtime hours to meet operational demands.

Overall, in 2024, the workforce grew in all state agencies except two, according to the report. One of the agencies is DOCCS, which lost more than a thousand employees according to the report.

"You know, we had a good lifestyle, you know, standard living," said Senator Stec. "This was good for me, you should do this son, you should do this nephew or niece, and they're not doing this anymore, they are going to have a hard time recruiting their way out of this."

DOCCS lost even more employees just a few months ago after correctional officers went on an illegal strike across the state, demanding better working conditions. One of those demands was to get rid of mandatory 24-hour shifts.

"This was about safety, if this was about, I want another buck an hour, I think you, me, a lot of other people, would be like suck it up butter cup, but this was never what it was about," Senator Stec continued.

As a result of that strike, the department says it fired 2,000 correctional officers. Governor Kathy Hochul assigned the National Guard to prisons to help with staffing.

As of Sunday, there are still National Guardsmen working inside prisons, according to correctional officers.

"It's a manpower, the staffing insistence that took an already understaffed prison system and made that problem even worse, and her solution is I want 5,000 untrained National Guard people in there," concluded Senator Stec.

According to the report, DOCCS has maintained a steady pattern of losing employees over the years. From 2015 to 2024, there was nearly a 22% decrease in workers employed by DOCCS.

<https://13wham.com/news/local/comptrollers-office-reports-doccs-earning-most-overtime-pay-across-state-agencies-groveland-correctional-facility-protests-livingston-county-new-york-state-correctional-facilities-attica-correctional-facility-national-guard-kathy-hochul-governor>

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## **Four Months After Guard Strike, Prison Staffing Crisis Persists**

**New York Focus, July 22,2025 :**

The prison agency's security ranks are 4,700 corrections officers and sergeants short of what it says it needs to run every program and housing area effectively.

In February, thousands of New York state prison guards walked off their jobs. With no officers to watch over daily operations, officials locked incarcerated people in their cells for days at a time. Governor Kathy Hochul deployed 6,000 National Guard troops, who assisted skeleton crews in trying to keep more than 30,000 prisoners fed and showered. At least seven incarcerated people died amid the chaos.

The wildcat strike ended after three weeks. Yet four months later, thousands of officer positions remain unfilled, and the state prison agency has struggled to resume normal operations, recent court records show.

Dozens of New York's 42 state prisons aren't holding weekend visitation. They've canceled summer school, sports leagues, religious study classes, and other programs. They've paused work release and counseling sessions and are cutting daily outdoor recreation time short. Some have extended officers' shifts from eight hours to 12 and kept incarcerated people in their cells for upwards of 20 hours a day.

"The functionality of the New York prison system is being held on by a thread," Cody Horrocks, who's been in the system for seven years and is currently incarcerated at Eastern Correctional Facility, wrote in a letter to New York Focus. The situation is "dire," he said.

Staffing issues are driving the problems, according to the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision. When the strike ended, about 2,000 officers, or roughly 15 percent of the security force, didn't return to work after DOCCS issued its final offer and ultimatum in negotiations — and were promptly fired. Hundreds of others resigned or retired early. DOCCS's security ranks are now 4,700 corrections officers and sergeants below what the department has calculated it needs to run every program and housing area effectively, according to a declaration the agency filed last week in a class action lawsuit against it.

The declaration offered security staff vacancy numbers for 35 of DOCCS's 42 facilities. On average, those prisons are operating with 32 percent of guard posts unfilled, with one, the medium-security Orleans Correctional Facility, operating with 48 percent of security jobs vacant.

The new job vacancies are exacerbating a longer-term staffing issue: officers not showing up for work. In 2023, the state Office of the Inspector General released a report alleging "egregious workers' compensation abuse" among DOCCS staff. The recent court declaration suggests that the issue hasn't been resolved. At Sing Sing Correctional Facility, for example, 102 staff are out on workers' comp and 28 are out on long-term sick leave — more than one in five security positions.

DOCCS's court filing offered numbers on long-term leave — which includes workers' comp and long-term sick leave, as well as parental and military leave — for 28 prisons. Adding them to the vacancy statistics, those facilities are operating at an average staffing level of 56 percent of what DOCCS says they need. Seven are operating at less than half capacity. Mid-State Correctional Facility, where guards allegedly beat a 23-year-old incarcerated man to death during the strike, is operating at 40 percent capacity.

### A Snapshot of the Prison Staffing Crisis

Since the strike earlier this year, dozens of DOCCS facilities have been operating with large percentages of their corrections officer jobs either vacant or occupied by people on long-term leave.

"Actively staffed" means that an officer is hired to the post and isn't on long-term leave. Certain numbers aren't available for Attica, Altona, Cape Vincent, Edgecomb, Gouverneur, Hale Creek, Hudson, Mohawk, Otisville, Queensboro, Riverview, Shawangunk, Taconic, and Wallkill prisons.

Even those numbers don't reveal the full picture of the staffing crisis. Sing Sing, a maximum security prison in the lower Hudson Valley, is dealing with a mass sick-out. Over 100 of its 592 security employees are calling out every day amid the continued

crisis, according to the court declaration, which didn't offer numbers on daily call-outs for other facilities.

All told, Sing Sing is operating with less than half the security staff DOCCS has calculated that it needs.

The New York State Correctional Officers and Police Benevolent Association, the union representing prison guards, did not respond to requests for comment.

To mitigate the security staffing crisis, the state has kept roughly 1,800 National Guard service members assigned to prisons, according to numbers offered in the court declaration. Sing Sing, for example, has 101 National Guard troops available to help alleviate the burden of its more than 300 vacant security jobs, long-term leave-takers, and daily sick-outs.

The troops have kept prisons afloat, according to both DOCCS and incarcerated people. In June, all of the 34 service members assigned to Eastern Correctional Facility had to temporarily abandon their prison posts for National Guard training exercises, according to Horrocks. "Everything was shut down," he said. "They had to use non-CO staff to help do processing for visits."

The National Guard isn't a long-term solution, however. For one, it's expensive: The governor's office has said that the continued deployment costs the state roughly \$100 million a month. Soldiers are also less effective than trained corrections officers.

"They do not escort incarcerated individuals alone, cannot respond to incarcerated violence and cannot be used to cover a housing unit alone, as they require security staff to be present," the court filing explained.

Horrocks recalled a time last month when someone suffered a drug overdose during outdoor recreation. "A couple National Guardsmen just stood there!" he wrote. "They aren't COs, and they can't perform the duties required of such."

DOCCS's staffing issues have trickled down to local jails, which hold people who've been sentenced to state prison time but are awaiting placement. Elmira Correctional Facility, DOCCS's main reception center, paused new intakes during the strike and for two months after, and has only recently resumed at a pace approaching pre-strike levels.

The intake pause has led to overcrowding in New York City's embattled Rikers Island jail complex. As of July 1, there were roughly 1,000 people on Rikers waiting for transfer to state prisons, a more than 500 percent increase over the same time last year, according to a letter city lawmakers sent to Hochul earlier this month.

To deal with the overflow, the city reopened a decommissioned jail at Rikers and started housing men at a women's facility. That has complicated logistics at the women's jail, leading to delayed family and legal visits and court appearances, the letter said.

"For decades, the conditions at Rikers Island have been extremely dangerous for both people in custody and staff," wrote New York City Council corrections committee chair Sandy Nurse and oversight committee chair Gale Brewer. "To ensure safety for all, it is critical for New York State to increase the frequency and number of people transferred to prison facilities until this backlog is alleviated."

In a reply, DOCCS Commissioner Daniel Martuscello wrote that the prison agency is chipping away at the backlog, taking in roughly 300 new male admissions a week. "DOCCS recognizes the impact [the strike] has had on Rikers Island and appreciates their patience and partnership as we continue to recover, recruit, and rebuild," he wrote.

To boost staffing levels in the long run, Martuscello said that DOCCS has launched "aggressive" recruitment initiatives. The department has come to an agreement with the corrections officers' union to launch a statewide campaign and is turning to areas where it has neglected recruiting, like urban centers and towns across the state border. DOCCS has offered new \$3,000 sign-on bonuses for recruits, as well as referral bonuses and retention bonuses for current staff who stay as the prison system tries to recover. The department is also turning to teenagers: This year, the state lowered the minimum age to become a corrections officer from 21 to 18.

"We are really studying what's going on across the country and what's worked well and should we deploy it here in New York," Martuscello said recently.

As a result of recruitment efforts, DOCCS saw a 129 percent increase in people taking the corrections officer civil service exam during the first five months of this year compared to the same time last year, the department said.

The agency filed the recent court declaration outlining the staffing crisis in response to a lawsuit from the Legal Aid Society, which has argued that DOCCS hasn't adequately justified its suspension of certain programming and out-of-cell time requirements put in place by a recent solitary confinement reform law, the HALT Solitary Confinement Act. Fourteen prisons have restored HALT-required programming for people in isolation, the declaration said. Plaintiffs in the lawsuit allege that they've been confined to their cells for 23 to 24 hours a day.

The filing “confirms DOCCS has no concrete timeline for coming into compliance with HALT at any of its facilities,” said Antony Gemmell, supervising attorney with Legal Aid’s Prisoners’ Rights Project.

DOCCS is coming into compliance with the law, including its requirement that every incarcerated person get at least seven hours of daily out-of-cell time, as quickly as it can, the agency argued in the filing. It anticipated that it’ll get up to speed by “early fall.” That’s not good enough, Legal Aid is arguing.

“We secured a preliminary injunction to protect thousands of incarcerated New Yorkers from the life-threatening harms of prolonged solitary confinement,” said Gemmell. “We remain committed to holding DOCCS accountable and ensuring it cannot evade HALT.”

<https://nysfocus.com/2025/07/22/new-york-doccs-prison-staffing-crisis-guard-strike>

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## **DOCCS submits emergency justifications for HALT suspensions, advocates push back**

**WPTZ, July 23, 2025 :**

In new court filings, the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) contends they do not have enough department staff to meet the needs of some of its facilities.

"Staffing crises alone should not be the basis of an emergency. DOCCS has been struggling to staff their facilities for years now," said Lauren Stephens-Davidowitz, an attorney with the Legal Aid Society's Prisoners Rights Project.

The nonprofit is suing DOCCS over its stalled implementation of the controversial Humane Alternatives to Long-Term Solitary Confinement (HALT) Act following statewide strikes over working conditions in state prisons.

Earlier this month, an Albany Supreme Court judge ruled in their favor, ordering DOCCS to provide the court with written justifications of the emergency situation on a facility-by-facility basis.

Commissioner Daniel F. Martuscello filed a 96-page affirmation responding to the order, but Legal Aid Society says the new audit did not include the details required to justify suspending HALT.



The 2022 policy was a central point of contention during a three-week-long, wildcat strike at DOCCS facilities, which severely destabilized the state's prison system.

The strikes prompted an executive order from Gov. Kathy Hochul, which declared a statewide disaster emergency and ordered the state National Guard to active service to supplement prison staffing when 75 percent of the security personnel had walked off the job.

This order remains in effect.

A chief demand of the striking workers was to totally repeal HALT, but their protests only resulted in a temporary, partial suspension as part of a deal between DOCCS and the New York State Correctional Officers and Police Benevolent Association (NYSCOPBA).

More than four months later, HALT remains suspended in more than half of DOCCS facilities, according to Martuscello's filing.

"The significant staffing shortfalls we face following the illegal job action forces each facility to make difficult choices about how to mobilize limited resources, making it impossible for some facilities to fully operationalize HALT programming," he wrote.

Facilities where HALT is fully restored:

- Albion
- Coxsackie
- Elmira
- Greene
- Hudson
- Bedford Hills
- Bare Hill
- Cape Vincent
- Franklin
- Green Haven
- Riverview
- Shawangunk
- Ulster
- Woodborne

Facilities where HALT is partially restored:

- Attica
- Auburn
- Cayuga
- Collins
- Fishkill
- Five Points
- Gouverneur
- Sing Sing
- Adirondack
- Lakeview
- Upstate
- Eastern
- Groveland
- Marcy
- Washington
- Wende
- Wyoming

Facilities where HALT is completely suspended:

- Mid-State
- Mohawk
- Clinton

There are seven facilities that Martuscello did not address because they do not have solitary housing.

Clinton Correctional Facility in Dannemora was 91 percent staffed before the corrections officers' strike, the documents stated. Today, the vacancy rate is 31 percent. The prison population is 1496.

That's a 2.7 to 1 ratio for inmates to security officers.

The Clinton audit details specific challenges that are straining their staffing struggles, including its large infirmary which offers daily clinics and provides intake to local facilities and require around-the-clock security. Clinton also offers a number of staff intensive mental health treatment programs.

Referred to as 'special housing', Clinton has a 24 solitary units, which are near full capacity at all times.

The filings also describe a recent and significant rise in unusual incidents, including an increase in "intoxicated behaviors". Approximately 80 inmates were reportedly under the influence of an unknown substance in the last month. NBC5 confirmed three, following exposures on June 11 and July 3.

Stephens-Davidowitz said these details don't meet the court's mandate.

"He didn't say at which facilities he is declaring an emergency. He didn't say the amount of out-of-cell time that is being provided to people at each of the DOCCS facilities. And he didn't say when restrictions on out-of-cell time would be lifted," she said.

Kariem Tomlin, 45, is a plaintiff in Legal Aid Society's lawsuit against DOCCS and is incarcerated in general population at Clinton.

The initial court petition claims that during the strikes, Tomlin was held in his cell 24 hours a day, and for several days, hot water was distributed to cells so inmates could bathe without leaving. Under the post-strike HALT suspension, Tomlin claims to be held in his cell 21.5 hours a day.

Meantime, DOCCS is understaffed by 4,700 and is still relying on National Guard members to supplement their operations.

"They need to come up with more urgent ways to deal with the crisis," Stephens-Davidowitz said. "They can release people to medical parole, the governor can grant clemency. They can reduce the prison population."

A memo from Martuscello circulated in April, which directed prison superintendents to identify inmates who qualify for an early release. It was met with public outcry and even some calls for the commissioner to resign.

Legal Aid Society told NBC5 it had a meeting scheduled with DOCCS Wednesday to avoid another court filing seeking information on the timeline for HALT's suspension. The organization said they would file for expedited discovery if their request was not met.

NBC5 reached out to both Legal Aid Society and DOCCS about the meeting and did not receive a response.

A new decision from the court remains pending.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/crime/doccs-submits-emergency-justifications-for-halt-suspensions-advocates-push-back/ar-AA1JaOYK?ocid=BingNewsVerp>

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## **Federal Government**

### **2,000 National Guard troops expected to be called up to assist at ICE detention facilities, sources say**

**CNN, July 22, 2025 :**

*Note: This item is being provided for your information.*

Roughly 2,000 National Guard troops across multiple states are expected to be mobilized to help Immigration and Customs Enforcement at detention facilities, according to a US official and a source familiar with the planning.

It's unclear when the troops will be mobilized, though the US official said the move, which is still under deliberation, could come as soon as this week. Both sources said the troops will be placed on Title 32 status, which puts them under the command of their governors and not subject to the Posse Comitatus Act, which prohibits the use of the military for domestic law enforcement purposes.

The Trump administration has ramped up immigration arrests nationwide, resulting in a dramatic increase of people in ICE custody. As of Tuesday, there were around 57,000 people in ICE custody, according to federal data obtained by CNN. Senior Trump officials are preparing to expand detention space nationwide in the coming weeks after receiving a historic amount of funding from Congress.

The US official said the mobilization is expected to call up National Guard troops from as many as 20 states who will be tasked with some hands-on roles including conducting finger printing and mouth swabbing of detainees. National Guard forces have largely been used to provide administrative assistance to ICE thus far, though the US official said ICE has communicated the need for assistance in other areas.

A defense official said the Pentagon would not "speculate on future operations or operational needs, but DoD stands ready to support our DHS partners in executing the President's executive orders and protecting the United States' sovereign territory."

The Department of Homeland Security did not respond to a request for comment.

The plans are in line with an earlier request from DHS to the Defense Department asking for thousands of National Guard personnel to assist with a range of tasks, including processing, transportation support and detention support. According to the request, obtained by CNN, up to 2,500 National Guard personnel were requested to

support security at detention facilities, in-facility operations like meal distribution, processing and emergency response.

A Senate aide said the expected move to put 2,000 Guardsmen on Title 32 status was significant and likely an indicator of the administration moving closer to the full request from DHS for thousands more Guardsmen to assist in immigration enforcement across the country.

“If you’re plotting the points on a graph of the way the administration has taken one step at a time, you continue that trajectory and it’s going to look pretty similar to what DHS has been requesting, as far as 20,000 troops across the country performing what we’d consider to be immigration enforcement activities,” the aide said.

CNN has reported that the White House and Department of Homeland Security have been seeking ways to use the National Guard and the military more broadly to help bolster immigration enforcement around the country, in an effort to ramp up arrests of migrants.

While ICE is preparing to receive an unprecedented \$75 billion in funding, current and former Homeland Security officials say the recruiting and training of ICE personnel is likely to take weeks or months, requiring outside assistance in the interim.

Roughly 4,000 National Guardsmen were mobilized last month to assist ICE personnel in Los Angeles, in response to protests and to protect federal personnel and property, though half of them have since been released from the mission.

The Florida National Guard has also been mobilized to conduct base camp security at a new detention center in the Everglades, the Pentagon announced earlier this month, though a spokesperson for the Florida Guard previously said they had not yet been tasked with “detention or enforcement operations.”

<https://www.cnn.com/2025/07/22/politics/2000-national-guard-troops-assist-ice-detention>

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### **For Information**

**Man Built Bombs and Planned to Set Them Off in Manhattan, Officials Say**

**New York Times, July 23, 2025 :**

**The man, who the authorities said expressed dismay over immigration and made antisemitic comments, was accused of placing explosive devices on New York City rooftops and on the Williamsburg Bridge.**

A Long Island man who publicly expressed his dismay over immigration in New York City in an online message to President Trump was indicted on Tuesday on charges of making homemade bombs and spreading them around Manhattan, the authorities said.

Michael Gann, 55, of Inwood, N.Y., a hamlet in Nassau County, made the bombs last month with chemicals he bought on the internet, and then brought them to Manhattan, where he stored them on the rooftops of residential buildings in SoHo and threw one onto the subway tracks on the Williamsburg Bridge, according to the U.S. attorney's office for the Southern District of New York.

No one was harmed by the explosives before the man was arrested last month, the authorities said. But Mr. Gann put "countless lives at risk," Jay Clayton, the interim U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York, said in a statement. One of the bombs contained about an ounce of explosive powder, which the authorities said was about 600 times the legal limit for consumer fireworks.

In March, several months before the authorities said he made the bombs, Mr. Gann posted a rambling message on X that tagged President Trump's official account and signaled his dislike for immigration and complained about its effect on New York City, according to the indictment.

"Dear @POTUS, I'm thinking just now here in NYC that it's too bad that the wall wasn't built before the National Guard would have to come here for the Protests and Riotation," the message said. "Or would you just drop a bomb on this place while and because they seem to be coming and coming?"

And just hours before he was arrested while carrying an improvised explosive device, or I.E.D., Mr. Gann posted a message to Instagram that said, "Who wants me to go out to play like no tomorrow?"

According to court documents, Mr. Gann built or tested the devices on Long Island in the presence of two witnesses, who then reported him to law enforcement.

One witness said he had been blinded for 15 to 20 seconds by the flash of light after Mr. Gann detonated a device and caused an explosion. The witness, who was a veteran, said Mr. Gann had also expressed antisemitic views by criticizing him for not taking some form of action against their Jewish neighbors, the court documents said.

"What kind of veteran are you?" Mr. Gann asked the witness, before he gestured to a nearby Jewish school. "You see a problem going on the neighborhood and you do nothing about it."

A grand jury indicted Mr. Gann on three counts: attempted destruction of property by means of explosives; transportation of explosive materials; and unlawful possession of destructive devices.

If convicted on all counts with consecutive sentences, he could face a maximum of 40 years in prison, the U.S. attorney's office said.

A lawyer for Mr. Gann, Martin Cohen, declined to comment via email on Wednesday.

Mr. Gann ordered the explosive chemicals, including about two pounds of potassium perchlorate and one pound of aluminum powder, online in late May, along with more than 200 cardboard tubes and more than 50 feet of fuses, according to the indictment.

Around that time, the authorities said Mr. Gann conducted internet searches related to explosives and firearms, including the production of flash powder and whether he would pass a background check.

In early June, according to the indictment, Mr. Gann received the items he had ordered and made at least seven I.E.D.s, storing at least five on rooftops in SoHo.

Law enforcement officers arrested him "on or about" June 5 near those apartment buildings, and found a seventh bomb on him. The authorities said that he lied to officers, saying he had disposed of his explosives and supplies in a dumpster.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/23/nyregion/nyc-homemade-bombs-man-charged.html>

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## **Big-name politician asks U.S. Army to award Staten Island hero with Medal of Honor**

**Staten Island Advance, July 24, 2025 :**

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. — The push to recognize U.S. Staff Sgt. Michael Ollis, a Staten Island hero, with the nation's highest military decoration has received another surge of momentum.

Sen. Charles E. Schumer is renewing his push in suggesting Ollis receive the Medal of Honor.

The effort comes a few weeks after the Richmond County American Legion told the Advance/SILive.com a resolution advocating Ollis' Distinguished Service Cross be upgraded to the highest honor.

The New York Democrat penned a letter to Chief of Staff of the Army General Randy A. George on Tuesday, urging the Army to recommend Ollis for the distinction.

"SSG Michael Ollis was among the best that our nation has to offer," the letter read in part. "He is the quintessence of what it means to be American, and his life is a testament to the values of the US Army and the United States of America. As such, I urge you to consider upgrading SSG Ollis's Distinguished Service Cross decoration and recommending him for the Medal of Honor."

#### The ultimate sacrifice

Ollis, a life-long resident of New Dorp, died in 2013 during a Taliban raid on Forward Operating Base Ghazni in Afghanistan.

As noted in Schumer's letter, at the time, Ollis, 24, was serving as a squad leader in Bushmaster Company, 2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 10th Mountain Division during his third combat deployment.

It was on Aug. 28 that the base came under fire and Ollis mobilized the men under his command to a secure location and "without pause or hesitation answered the call to duty" and advanced towards the assailants, according to the letter, which was exclusively shared with the Advance/SILive.com.

Ollis rallied with coalition forces, among them Polish Officer 2nd Lt. Karol Cierpica, who had already suffered casualties and was engaging the insurgents. It was at this time that Ollis and Cierpica came in contact with a suicide bomber.

In an act of heroism, Ollis positioned himself between the bomber and Cierpica, firing upon the target.

As explained in the letter, although Ollis was able to effectively drop the attacker, the vest detonated and killed him, but not before he shielded Cierpica from the full blast, saving Cierpica's life.

"Although the two warfighters had never met before and did not speak the same language, SSG Ollis made the ultimate sacrifice, placing himself in the line of fire to protect his brothers in arms," Schumer stated in the letter.

As indicated in the letter, witnesses present at the base that day claim that Ollis' sacrifice not only saved Cierpica, but it preserved the lives of more than 40 military and civilian personnel.



## The push for a Medal of Honor

Ollis has since been recognized with the Purple Heart, the Bronze Star, the Audie Murphy Medallion, and the Polish Armed Forces Gold Medal — that nation's highest honor for non-citizens.

In 2019, Ollis' Silver Star was upgraded to the Distinguished Service Cross.

"I believe that SSG Ollis's steadfast devotion to his fellow soldiers, leadership of the soldiers under his command, and his heroic actions to engage the enemy while placing his own life in jeopardy qualify him to posthumously receive the Medal of Honor, our nation's highest military decoration," the letter added. "This sentiment is shared by Americans far and wide - from SSG Ollis's parents, his commanding officers at the time, and American soldiers who served alongside Michael and witnessed his actions that day, to the Richmond County American Legion which has authored a state resolution advocating for him to receive the Medal of Honor."

The latest push to upgrade Ollis' honor comes years after an initial effort. Back in 2022, Schumer wrote a letter to Gen. James McConville, the chief of staff of the Army at the time, asking the U.S. Department of Defense to recommend Ollis for the Medal of Honor.

Should this latest push be ultimately approved by the president, Ollis will become the third Staten Island recipient of the great honor.

The Rev. Lt. Vincent R. Capodanno received the Medal of Honor in 1969 for his service during the Vietnam War and Joseph F. Merrell Jr. received the award in 1946 for his service during World War II.

Capodanno died in action while ministering to wounded Marines on the battlefield during the Vietnam War. He was 38 years old. There is an ongoing push for Capodanno to be canonized.

Merrell was 18 years old when he "made a gallant, one-man attack against vastly superior enemy forces near Lohe, Germany," according to his Medal of Honor citation. Merrell sacrificed his own life "so that his comrades go on to victory."

<https://www.silive.com/news/2025/07/big-name-politician-asks-us-army-to-award-staten-island-hero-with-medal-of-honor.html>

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## **History**

**Looking back 20 years: La. Guard's Tiger Brigade's 2004 Iraq deployment**

**KATC, July 24, 2025 :**

NEW ORLEANS – In 2004, Louisiana's 256th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, known as the Tiger Brigade, deployed to Iraq for Operation Iraqi Freedom. Despite being the Louisiana National Guard's largest unit, the brigade required auxiliary forces to meet mission requirements. Among those answering the call was the New York National Guard's 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, known as the Fighting Sixty-Ninth. The 69th quickly became integral to the 256th's operations in and around Baghdad.

The 69th was no stranger to the Global War on Terror, having been activated after 9/11 to provide security at Ground Zero. There, Lt. Gerard Baptiste, a New York City firefighter and member of the 69th, was killed during rescue operations. His commanding officer, at the time, Lt. Col. Geoffrey Slack, called him "the first Soldier to die in the first battle of the first war of the 21st century."

With roots tracing back to the 1850s and the wave of Irish immigrants to New York City, the 69th had a storied past, including fighting against Louisiana's "Fighting Tigers" in the Civil War. A hundred and forty years later, the former foes found themselves fighting side-by-side against a new enemy.

Alerted in March 2004 for a September deployment, Lt. Col. Slack expressed concern about his unit's readiness. Arriving at Fort Hood, Slack and Command Sgt. Maj. George Brett received a warm welcome from then Brig. Gen. John Basilica, the 256th's commander. "You're on my team now and you'll get the same as everyone else in the Tiger Brigade," Basilica reportedly said. "Do the best with what you have and we'll cross-level the rest from my other battalions."

That September, the 256th arrived in Kuwait, followed by a harrowing drive across the Iraqi border into West Baghdad. Designated "Task Force Wolfhound," the 69th took responsibility for the northernmost sector around Al Taji. This rural area proved a dangerous launching point for insurgent mortar and rocket attacks on nearby Camp Cooke, a former Iraqi artillery school and Republican Guard stronghold for Saddam Hussein's government.

Task Force Wolfhound consisted of three infantry companies from the 69th and a Louisiana company from 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment, better known as the Blacksheep. The Blacksheep, from Houma, Louisiana, patrolled in Bradley fighting vehicles, while the New York companies relied primarily on Humvees.

The Wolfhounds' primary mission was to stop the mortar and rocket attacks from Taji being launched at Camp Cooke. The Wolfhound Scout Platoon, acting as a quick reaction force, often braved considerable danger to scout ahead and assess threats.

By late November 2004, the battalion had its first casualties: several wounded and two killed in action.

In mid-February 2005, the 69th's area of responsibility shifted south to patrolling an eight-mile stretch of "Route Irish," the perilous highway between the Baghdad Green Zone and Baghdad International Airport – often called "the Most Dangerous Road in the World." Enemy activity surged, leading to more casualties.

By July 2005, thanks to the Wolfhounds' relentless efforts, Route Irish was considerably safer. But the victory came at the steep price of the unit's casualties of war.

The Fighting Sixty-Ninth returned home in September 2005, their service marked the following March by a proud march down Fifth Avenue as the centerpiece of New York City's St. Patrick's Day parade. Marching alongside them: their Louisiana brethren, the Blacksheep.

This story is the second installment of a monthly series that will culminate in November, following the 20-year reunion. Veterans from the 2004-2005 deployment can visit the Facebook page: <https://facebook.com/events/s/save-the-date-oif3-20-year-reu/1882908302256653/>

***Photo Caption:*** Capt. Joseph Whaley, Soldier with the New York National Guard's 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, poses with local Iraqi children near Taji, Iraq, November 4, 2004. Designated "Task Force Wolfhound," the 69th took responsibility for the northernmost sector around Al Taji. This rural area, while seemingly quiet, proved a dangerous launching point for insurgent mortar and rocket attacks on nearby Camp Cooke, a former Iraqi artillery school and Republican Guard stronghold for Saddam Hussein's government. (U.S. Army National Guard courtesy photo)\

***Photo Caption:*** Soldiers with the New York National Guard's 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment assess the aftermath of an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) detonation near Baghdad, Iraq, during the unit's 2004 deployment to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom III. In mid-February 2005, the 69th shifted to patrolling an eight-mile stretch of "Route Irish," the perilous highway between the Baghdad Green Zone and Baghdad International Airport – often called "the Most Dangerous Road in the World." (U.S. Army National Guard courtesy photo)

By Rhett Breerwood Louisiana National Guard Public Affairs Office and LANG Museums

<https://www.katc.com/news/covering-louisiana/looking-back-20-years-la-guards-tiger-brigades-2004-iraq-deployment>

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**New York Army National Guard**

## **Duty Calls: Several Army National Guard units have new leaders**

**Times Union, July 21, 2025:**

Several New York Army National Guard units have new commanders.

Col. Bryon Linnehan assumed command of the historic Harlem Hellfighters 369th Sustainment Brigade during a ceremony in Harlem. He replaced Col. Patrick Clare, who was promoted to brigadier general.

Command Sgt. Maj. Javier Lugo took over senior enlisted advisor duties from Command Sgt. Maj. Leyan Jones, who became the state's top enlisted leader.

Clare and Jones received a Meritorious Service Medal during the change of command ceremony.

Lt. Col. Eric Fritz, a veteran of two deployments to the Afghanistan War, assumed command of the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Assault Helicopter unit during a ceremony at the Army Aviation Flight Facility in Latham.

Capt. Danielle Dias took command of the 138th Public Affairs Detachment during a ceremony held at Camp Smith Training Site in Cortlandt Manor.

### **369th Sustainment Brigade**

Linnehan is a distinguished military graduate of Johns Hopkins University, where he earned a political science degree. He also earned a masters of strategic studies from the Army War College.

He has earned a Bronze Star Medal, two Meritorious Service Medals, two Army Commendation Medals, two Army Achievement Medals, a Combat Action Badge, an Army Parachutist Badge, a Valorous Unit Award, a Meritorious Unit Citation, a German Military Proficiency Gold Badge, a New York State Commendation Medal, and a New York State Humane Service Medal.

"The 369th has a history dating to its origins as the 15th Colored Regiment in 1913," said Sgt. 1st Class Sebastian Rothwyn, unit spokesman. "It served in World War I and is a symbol of courage and resilience. The unit's legacy was a key theme throughout the ceremony, as remarkable stories of the 369th Infantry Regiment were told."

The 369th Sustainment Brigade's history is intertwined with the Harlem Hellfighters of World War I. Then known as the 369th Infantry Regiment, the unit served with French forces, and their band, led by Lt. James Reese Europe, introduced jazz music to the Continent. The 369th soldiers saw more frontline combat than any other

American unit for 191 days, earning the French Croix de Guerre and the moniker "Hellfighters" from German adversaries, Rothwyn said.

One of unit's soldiers, Sgt. Henry Johnson of Albany, earned a posthumous Congressional Medal of Honor in World War I.

Lugo acknowledged the brigade's worldwide recognition and historical significance. He pledged to equip his soldiers and noncommissioned officers for success and expressed his enthusiasm about joining the Hellfighters.

"The 369th is known worldwide," Lugo said. He spoke about when he was deployed with the 101st Expeditionary Signal Battalion, how active-duty soldiers acknowledged the tremendous history of the 369th."

Major Gen. Raymond Shields, state adjutant general; Brig. Gen. Isabel Smith, commanding general of the 53rd Troop Command; Lt. Col. Michael Costello, Chaplain (Maj.) Michael Scholes, Lt. Col. Mark Colloton, and Sgt. Maj. Theodore Gentile participated in the change of command ceremony.

Representatives of the following organizations also participated:

Le Souvenir Français, which plays a vital role in keeping alive the memory of the French soldiers who fought for American freedom and in fostering the enduring relationship between France and the United States;

The Doughboy Foundation, which supports programs, projects and activities that educate the public about America's participation in World War I;

The 369th Veterans Association, a group that aims to honor and remember the contributions of veterans, particularly those who served in the 369th Infantry Regiment during World War I and other conflicts;

The Old Guard of the City of New York, supporting active and deployed service members.

Helicopter battalion

Fritz of Webster, Monroe County, leads the battalion that has companies based in Latham and the Long Island MacArthur Airport in Ronkonkoma.

He replaced Col. Paul Bailie, who assumed command of the 42nd Combat Aviation Brigade.

Fritz previously served as the second-in-command of the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation.

He enlisted in the Army in 2000 and was commissioned as a second lieutenant through the Officer Candidate School program in 2002.

After completing flight training and Aviation Officer Basic Course in 2004, he held several assignments with the 642nd Aviation Support Battalion, which is headquartered at the Army Flight Facility in Rochester. He was also assigned to Company B, 3rd Battalion, 126th Aviation, which flies the CH-47 Chinook heavy lift helicopter.

He deployed to Afghanistan in 2007 and again in 2012. During his first deployment, he served as a platoon leader with Company B, 3rd Battalion, 126th Aviation, providing direct CH-47 support to 1st Battalion, 101st Aviation.

During his second deployment, Fritz was assigned as company commander for 116th soldiers based in three locations in Regional Command South Afghanistan.

In 2020, Fritz deployed to Kuwait as the deputy division aviation operations officer for the 42nd Infantry Division.

He also served as division aviation operations officer and brigade operations officer for the 42nd Combat Aviation Brigade.

Fritz is a master Army aviator qualified in piloting CH-47 Chinook, OH-58 Kiowa and UH-1 Iroquois helicopters. He also holds certifications as an instructor pilot and instrument examiner in the CH-47 Chinook.

In addition to his military assignments, Fritz is a dual-status military/federal technician within the New York Army National Guard and works as a supervisory aircraft pilot and commander of the Army Aviation Support Facility #2 in Rochester.

Fritz is a graduate of several military schools and the Command and General Staff College. He is currently enrolled in the Army War College. Fritz earned a bachelor's in business administration.

He has earned a Bronze Star Medal, a Meritorious Service Medal, an Army Commendation Medal, a Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, and a Joint Meritorious Unit Award.

#### 138th Public Affairs Detachment

Dias replaces Capt. Stephanie Fernandez, who led the unit for the last two-and-a-half years. The 138th Public Affairs Detachment is made up of soldiers trained to tell the Army story through words, photographs and video.

The detachment has deployed soldiers to cover Army missions in Brazil, Chile and South Africa, and supported domestic events such as the Florida Hurricane

Response and the Presidential Inauguration. Most recently, the detachment's soldiers documented the New York National Guard response to the correction officers' strike from February to March.

Dias of Wappinger Falls was commissioned through an Army Reserve Officers Training Corps program at James Madison University.

She previously served as an air and missile defense officer with the 42nd Infantry Division.

Dias has earned a bachelor of science in justice studies with a concentration in crime and criminology; and a minor in military leadership.

She deployed to the Horn of Africa with the 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade of the Wisconsin Army National Guard in 2023.

The commander has earned a Joint Service Commendation Medal, an Army Commendation Medal and a Joint Meritorious Unit Award.

News of your troops and units can be sent to Times Union, Duty Calls, Terry Brown, Box 15000, Albany, NY 12212 or [brownt@timesunion.com](mailto:brownt@timesunion.com).

<https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/duty-calls-new-leaders-several-army-national-20777132.php>

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## **New armory one-step closer to being built at former Heritage Park site (video)**

**WNYT, July 23, 2025 :**

A new armory in the Capital Region is a step closer to reality.

Sen. Chuck Schumer said he has taken the next step towards funding the project.

As NewsChannel 13 has reported, the plan is to build a new Armory and Readiness Center in Colonie.

The new center will serve as the New York Army National Guard's 42nd Infantry Division headquarters. It will be located at the former site of the old Heritage Park minor league baseball stadium that was home to the Albany-Colonie Yankees.

The new headquarters will consolidate facilities at Watervliet Arsenal.

Schumer said this will help maximize space and accommodate planned modernization and expansion projects there.

The current armory was built in 1971 and is running out of space, Schumer said.

<https://wnyt.com/capital-region-news/new-armory-one-step-closer-to-being-built-at-former-heritage-park-site/>

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## **Press Release: Schumer Secures \$90 Million Authorization for New Armory for NY Army National Guard's 42nd Infantry Division Headquarters**

**Quiver Quantitative, July 22, 2025 :**

U.S. Senator Chuck Schumer has announced a significant development toward constructing a new armory and readiness center for the NY Army National Guard's 42nd Infantry Division Headquarters. The facility will be built on the former Heritage Park site in Colonie, as the existing armory is no longer adequate for the Division's requirements.

The recent authorization of \$90 million in the Senate's National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2026 marks a critical milestone in funding for the project. Schumer emphasized the necessity for modern facilities, stating the current armory was built over 50 years ago and needs expansion to support the Division's growing operational needs.

Major General Ray Shields, Adjutant General of the New York National Guard, and Albany County Executive Daniel P. McCoy expressed support for the initiative, highlighting its potential to enhance readiness and benefit the local economy. Schumer aims to secure additional funding to advance the project, which is anticipated to consolidate existing National Guard facilities.

Disclaimer: This is an AI-generated summary of a press release. The model used to summarize this release may make mistakes. See the full release [here](#).

<https://www.quiverquant.com/news/Press+Release%3A+Schumer+Secures+%2490+Million+Authorization+for+New+Armory+for+NY+Army+National+Guard%27s+42nd+Infantry+Division+Headquarters>

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**Meet Some of Our Local Scholars**



## **Massapequa Post, July 24, 2025 :**

•The following members of the New York Army National Guard were recently promoted: Christopher Maddalone of Massapequa Park, assigned to the 1108th Ordnance Company, was promoted to the rank of sergeant; Raymond Bretana of Farmingdale, assigned to the Company B, 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation Regiment, was promoted to the rank of chief.

<https://www.massapequapost.com/articles/meet-some-of-our-scholars-6/>

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### **New York National Guard**

#### **US military investigating whether new pistol can fire ‘uncommanded’ after death of Air Force guard**

**NY Post, July 24, 2025 :**

The US military is investigating its new service pistol after the fatal shooting of an Air Force guard — following claims that the gun can fire without the trigger being pulled.

The Sig Sauer M18, the military version of the popular Sig P320 handgun, has been at the forefront of multiple lawsuits alleging that the weapon can fire unprompted.

It’s now been pulled from standard use at several facilities after a security service member was killed on Sunday at the FE Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming, when the gun discharged, officials said.

Air Force Global Strike Command issued the “stand down” order to all of its units until officials at their bases can investigate all of their M18s for any “safety concerns.”

The M18 has served as the Air Force’s primary pistol since 2019, but the gun is at the center of dozens of lawsuits alleging that the weapon fires without its trigger ever being pulled.

“We want to make sure there’s nothing wrong with the weapon,” an Air Force official told the Washington Post.

The exact circumstances of the weapon firing were not released.

The Army, Navy and Marine Corps have said they were reviewing the incident as well.

Following the deadly incident, SIG Sauer, the manufacturer of the pistol, expressed its condolences to the service members and families impacted by the shooting.

“We have absolute confidence in the military’s ability to conduct a thorough investigation and are working with the Air Force and Army to answer any of their questions,” the company said in a statement.

The M18 became the standard-issue pistol in the Air Force in 2019, replacing the M9 (Beretta 92) that the military had been using for more than 30 years.

The shooting comes just weeks after an FBI report echoed years-long concerns about the Sig P320-series pistols.

The FBI’s Ballistic Research Facility opened a probe into the firearm series at the behest of Michigan State Police when a trooper’s pistol discharged “uncommanded” last year.

“According to the MSP motor officer’s statement and the statements of others present, at no time was the trigger pressed intentionally or inadvertently,” the report stated.

Days after the FBI report became public, Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials issued a ban on the use of the Sig P320 pistols for its agents.

The Sig pistols were also at the center of a 2023 investigation by the WaPo and The Trace, a group that monitors gun violence, finding that more than 100 people have reported their handgun’s suddenly firing without anyone ever pulling the trigger.

Sig Sauer has faced a mountain of lawsuits over such cases in the US, with at least 77 filed in New Hampshire alone.

The company has long refuted the allegations, asserting that its brand is being attacked by anti-gun groups and “the mainstream media.”

“The P320 CANNOT, under any circumstances, discharge without a trigger pull — that is a fact,” the company said in a statement back in March.

“Claims that unintended discharges are anything more than negligent handling and/or manufactured lies to support anti-gun, anti-SIG agenda are false,” the manufacturer added, claiming that several lawsuits have been dismissed around the nation.

It also says that investigators have never been able to replicate “uncommanded fire” incidents with the weapons.

With the M18 temporarily pulled from the Air Force Global Strike Command bases, officials have ordered its units to use the M4 rifle in the meantime

<https://nypost.com/2025/07/24/us-news/us-military-opens-probe-into-sig-m18-pistol-over-claims-it-fired-by-itself-killed-air-force-guard/>

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## **Space Force**

### **Space Force Will Begin Assuming National Guard Missions in October**

**Air and Space Forces Magazine, July 22, 2025:**

The Space Force will begin assuming space missions currently conducted by the Air National Guard starting at the beginning of October, people familiar with the matter told Air & Space Forces Magazine.

When asked about the timeline for the moves, a Department of the Air Force spokesperson confirmed to Air & Space Forces Magazine that Guard space missions would begin transferring to the Space Force starting Oct. 1, 2025.

The lengthy debate over the future of the Guard's space missions started almost as soon as the Space Force was created in 2019 as a new service under the Department of the Air Force. Space-focused missions in the Active-Duty Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marine Corps have been transferred to the Space Force.

But there are still space-focused Air National Guard personnel. Responsibility for those units' missions is now set to transfer to the Space Force in the fall. The move is likely to spark criticism from some governors, lawmakers, and advocacy groups who favor creating a separate Space National Guard instead.

In late 2025, the Space Force gained the legal authority to assume the Guard's space missions, a move that is now set to start to occur in a few months. The moves in question involve units in Alaska, California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, and Ohio.

The Department of the Air Force has the authority to transfer up to 578 personnel. The Space Force is working on a model for part-time Guardians, but that is unlikely to be ready to go by October. The future of nearly 600 space-focused Air National Guardsmen hangs in the balance.

If Guardsmen do not want to join the Space Force, they cannot be transferred to the service without their consent. A provision of the law also requires the Space Force "to the maximum extent practicable" not to relocate any individuals for three years following the transfer, and to keep units in the state where they are now located for 10 years, even after they switch services.

The Air National Guard must retrain and reassign any Guard member who decides against transferring. The law does not require the consent of the governors whose states house those units.

Ever since the Air Force ceased performing space missions, the Department of the Air Force, the National Guard Bureau, and congressional lawmakers have been wrangling over what to do about the Air National Guard's space mission.

The Space Force insists that transferring the mission to its service is the most effective and efficient solution. Under the Biden administration, a Department of the Air Force study delivered to lawmakers last spring said transferring the Guard's space-focused missions was "by far the most advisable" option, a decision endorsed at the time by the office of the undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness. Last May, National Guard officials said their own survey found 70 percent of respondents would prefer to retrain or retire rather than join the Space Force.

The Space Force Personnel Management Act, part of the 2025 National Defense Authorization Act, allowed the service to have part-time and full-time Guardians in one component, an alternative to the part-time National Guard and Reserve setup that exists for the Air Force and Army.

Such an arrangement would be unique among the armed services. However, the exact timeline for how the service will incorporate part-time Guardians remains to be seen.

The Trump administration and its Secretary of the Air Force, Troy Meink, are now following through on the NDAA's prescription to transfer the Air National Guard's space-focused missions into the Space Force.

A bipartisan group of lawmakers who proposed the Space National Guard Establishment Act in March to override the previous legislation, is likely to oppose such a move. President Donald Trump also promised he would create a Space National Guard on the campaign trail last summer.

<https://www.airandspaceforces.com/space-force-national-guard-space-missions-october/>

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## **Veterans**

**Combat Veteran and Former Teacher Announces Campaign to Challenge Rep. Tenney for NY24**

**WENY, July 20, 2025 :**

LOCKPORT, N.Y. (WENY) -- A combat veteran from Houghton, New York, launched her campaign on Saturday to represent New York's 24th Congressional District, taking on Republican Congresswoman Claudia Tenney.

Alissa Ellman is seeking the democratic nomination for 2026.

According to Ellman's campaign website, she served in Afghanistan with the Army National Guard and returned home to New York to become a teacher for underprivileged youths.

In 2025, now in Lockport, she worked for the Office of Veterans' Affairs to help veterans secure their benefits when she was fired during the cuts made by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE).

Ellman then organized town halls in her community to talk about Congresswoman Tenney's votes in Washington D.C.

Ellman says that after receiving no response from Tenney for months, she decided to run for Congress.

Tenney has held the seat since she was elected in 2023. Previously, she represented the 22nd District from 2017 to 2019 and from 2021 to 2023.

For more on Ellman's campaign and platform issues, you can visit her campaign website, Alissa Ellman for Congress.

<https://www.weny.com/story/52936291/combat-veteran-and-former-teacher-announces-campaign-to-challenge-rep-tenney-for-ny24>

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## **National Guard Veteran Launches Campaign in NY-24**

**Fingerlakes Daily News, July 20, 2025:**

Army National Guard veteran and educator Alissa Ellman is officially launching her campaign for Congress in New York's 24th District.

The Democrat announced her candidacy at Veterans Memorial Park in Lockport, where she vowed to challenge Republican incumbent Claudia Tenney in 2026.

Ellman, a Houghton native, served two tours in Afghanistan and later worked as a veterans advocate at the Department of Veterans Affairs. She was laid off earlier this year as part of suggested federal cuts by Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency.

A cancer survivor, she says her campaign will focus on putting working families and everyday people ahead of special interests.

<https://www.fingerlakesdailynews.com/local/national-guard-veteran-launches-campaign-in-ny-24>

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