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Office of the Governor
NEWS RELEASE

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**DiFRANCESCO SIGNS LEGISLATION EXPANDING VETERANS' BENEFITS
TO THOSE WHO SERVED IN LEBANON CRISIS AND PEACEKEEPING
MISSIONS**

Honors Local Heroes and late Assemblyman Alan Augustine

Acting Governor Donald T. DiFrancesco signed into law today two bills expanding benefits to those veterans who participated in the Lebanon Crisis of 1958 and peacekeeping operations in Somalia and the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. DiFrancesco honored two New Jersey veterans, as well as the late Assemblyman Alan Augustine, who sponsored both bills.

"New Jersey doesn't forget its fighting men and women. We honor them and we honor their service, whether they served in a World War, Southeast Asia, Korea, the Persian Gulf, or in conflicts such as Lebanon, Somalia, or Bosnia and Herzegovina.

"The world today is a very different place in the struggle for freedom. Our fighting forces are called to action in many different locations around the world. Yet when facing the enemy there is no difference between these limited actions and the larger battles fought in World War II, Korea or Vietnam. Both of the bills before me today honor our commitment to our servicemen and women," stated the acting Governor.

Assembly Bill 1330 extends eligibility for various state benefits to veterans on active duty during the Lebanon Crisis of 1958. These benefits can include civil service preference and eligibility for enhanced benefits under the Teachers' Pension Fund and the Public Employees' Retirement System. Veterans of the Lebanon Crisis may also be able to purchase credit for military service as members of the Police and Firemen's Retirement System, or qualify for the annual veterans' personal property tax deduction.

Assembly Bill 1336 extends similar benefits to veterans of Operation "Restore Hope" in Somalia and Operations "Joint Endeavor" and "Joint Guard" in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

DiFrancesco cited Assemblyman Augustine, who sponsored A1330 along with Assemblyman Joe Azzolina (R-Middlesex/Monmouth). The bill was cosponsored by Assemblymembers Kip Bateman (R-Morris/Somerset), Guy Gregg (R-Sussex/Hunterdon/Morris), Rose Heck (R-Bergen), and Sam Thompson (R-Middlesex/Monmouth). Senator Joe Kyrillos (R-Middlesex/Monmouth) sponsored the bill in the Senate.

"The legislation Alan sponsored during his years in the Assembly covered the gamut of issues facing our great state. And I know that he was very proud of the bill I will sign today, since it honors the role veterans play in protecting our freedoms. I am pleased that Alan's daughter, Wendy Brill, her husband, Tom, and granddaughter, Allison, are with us today," remarked DiFrancesco.

The acting Governor also honored two veterans who will benefit from today's legislation. Staff Sgt. Kendrick Ross of Willingboro is a veteran of "Operation Restore Hope" in Somalia, where he served our country from November 1993 to February 1994. Sgt. Ross is on active duty in the U.S. Air Force.

Doug Hansen served on the U.S.S. Essex during the Lebanon Crisis. He was honorably discharged from the U.S. Navy, where he was a Petty Officer.

A1336 was sponsored by Assemblymembers Augustine, Nick Asselta (R-Cape May/Atlantic/Cumberland), Nick Felice (R-Bergen/Passaic) and Ken LeFevre (R-Atlantic) and by Senators Jim Cafiero (R-Cape May/Atlantic/Cumberland) and Tony Bucco (R-Morris).

Under DiFrancesco's leadership, New Jersey has increased the annual property tax deduction for eligible veterans and surviving spouses, and excluded military pensions and survivor's benefits from the state income tax.

"In all of these steps, we have been guided by one philosophy: wherever they served, whether the conflict was small or large or in-between, our veterans deserve the best we can give. We will continue to do right for them, because they have been there for New Jersey and America," stated DiFrancesco.