

Senator Pam Helming

Representing the 54th New York Senate District



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 27, 2026
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From WWII Service to a Lifetime of Leadership: Senator Pam Helming Names 104-Year-Old Eugene “Gene” Gerrard to Veterans Hall of Fame

Senator Pam Helming today announced that Eugene “Gene” Gerrard, a resident of Quail Summit in Canandaigua, has been selected as her 2026 inductee to the New York State Senate Veterans Hall of Fame. The Hall of Fame recognizes veterans whose service extends far beyond their time in uniform.

A member of the Greatest Generation, Gene has dedicated more than eight decades to serving his country, his community, and his fellow veterans.

At just 17 years old, Gene felt called to serve. While working as a printer during the day and attending trade school at night in Brooklyn, he set his sights on joining the military. He enlisted in the United States Coast Guard in 1942, where he served honorably until 1945, achieving the rank of quartermaster first class. His military service earned him multiple commendations, including the American Campaign Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, Good Conduct Medal, World War II Victory Medal, and the Philippine Liberation Medal.

For Gene, service was never confined to wartime; it became a lifelong mission.

After returning home, Gene built and operated two successful printing businesses for more than six decades, contributing to the local economy and creating jobs. His commitment to public service led him to serve as a Brookhaven Town councilman for more than 20 years, where he worked on behalf of residents and helped guide the growth and development of his community.

Gene’s impact is equally profound in the fire service. He devoted 50 years to the Mt. Sinai Fire Department, serving as chief, chaplain, and fire police captain. He also founded the department’s benevolent association and established the Brookhaven

Volunteer Firefighters Museum, ensuring that the legacy of volunteer firefighters is preserved for future generations.

At 104, Gene's appreciation for this country remains as strong as ever. When asked what he loves most about America, his answer is simple: "Our freedoms." He continues to celebrate that love by marching in the Canandaigua Fourth of July parade each year. He is also a social member of the Cheshire Fire Department and an honorary member of the Peacemaker Brewing Company's running club.

Gene is a regular volunteer at the Canandaigua VA, where he has been assisting fellow veterans for many years.

"Gene's life defines service," said Senator Pam Helming. "He answered the call during World War II and never stopped giving back. As a veteran, elected official, firefighter, and volunteer, Gene has spent a lifetime strengthening the communities around him. His words, 'our freedoms,' say it all. That's what he fought for, and that's what he continues to honor every day. He is also an amazing father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, and that legacy of service lives on through his family."

Gene Gerrard says, "I am humbled to receive such an honor. It was my duty and an honor to serve my country. It was an honor to serve the GREATEST Country on Earth."

Matt Parsons, Commander, Canandaigua American Legion Post 256, adds, "Gene Gerrard is truly one of a kind. His passion for life is an inspiration to everyone fortunate enough to know him. No matter the situation, Gene always has a smile on his face and embraces every moment with enthusiasm, kindness, and joy. His positive spirit is contagious, and his ability to make others feel welcome and appreciated is something very special. Simply put, the world is a better place because of people like Gene."

The New York State Senate Veterans Hall of Fame honors veterans from across the state who have not only served their nation with distinction but have continued to make meaningful contributions in their communities.

Gene was formally recognized alongside fellow honorees from across New York as part of the Senate's annual Veterans Hall of Fame celebration.

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