

State Representative Maria Lorts Sachs Introduces Bill to Fight Military Impersonation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 4, 2010

CONTACT: Carla Cole, 850-488-1662
Steve Murray, 850-487-1533
Florida Dept. of Veterans' Affairs

DEERFIELD BEACH, Fla. -- That “veteran” in uniform asking for a donation at the intersection or in front of the grocery store may not actually be a veteran at all, and three top lawmakers from South Florida are fighting back.

Senator Dan Gelber (D-Miami Beach), Representative Lorts Maria Sachs (D-Delray Beach) and Broward County Commissioner Kristin Jacobs will hold a news conference at 9 a.m. Friday, March 5, 2010 at the Deerfield Beach VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC). The clinic is located at 2100 SW 10th Street in Deerfield Beach. The lawmakers will announce the introduction of legislation to prevent the impersonation of veterans and military personnel to solicit donations.

Representative Sachs, in honor of her father, Army Infantry Officer Russell F. Lorts, files a bill every year to protect and promote the rights of veterans. This year, House Bill 1455 is aimed at protecting the integrity of the country’s military. The legislation would make it a felony to misrepresent oneself as a veteran or member of the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines or Coast Guard, in order to collect donations from the public. In many of Florida’s major cities, paid solicitors dress in military uniforms to ask motorists and shoppers for contributions.

“This legislation makes protecting the honor of veterans and members of the military a top priority,” said Representative Sachs, whose father was a decorated combat veteran in World War II. “Presently, our firefighters and law enforcement officers are protected from impersonation by law, and the same should hold true for our country’s fighting men and women.”

“The Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs receives dozens of calls requesting information about the solicitation of funds in the name of our state’s 1.7 million veterans,” said FDVA Communications Director Steve Murray. “Non-veterans should not represent themselves as veterans for the sake of fundraising. Our department is working with Senator Gelber and Representative Sachs in their efforts to end such practices.”

###