

There are more illegal immigrants in New Jersey (500,000) than there are veterans (400,000) who served this country courageously and honorably. For decades the veterans of New Jersey have been hoping for an increase in their property tax reduction from the present \$ 250. That hasn't happened. Other states offer their veterans as much as ten times the amount New Jersey gives to its veterans for property tax reduction.

Meanwhile, Governor Murphy and the State Legislature have decided to hand over two million dollars of tax payer money to illegal immigrants to assist in their legal fees in fighting deportation. There are reports that the cost of such a program could rise above fifteen million.

There is pending legislation ( SCR108) that would provide a constitutional amendment to increase veterans property tax reduction to \$ 500. It was first introduced in 2003 - fifteen years ago. Nothing has happened. Yet, Governor Murphy and the state legislature took little time to pass legislation to give college financial aid to illegal immigrants. The cost of that aid starts at five million dollars and is likely to increase by millions more. ACR81 is a continuing resolution to amend the N.J. State Constitution to increase veterans property tax reduction to \$1000 with future increases based on consumer price index. It's been pending since 2016 and not likely to be voted on soon. Veterans from WW2, Korean War and the Vietnam War, have waited decades for an increase in property tax reduction. Hundreds of those veterans have since passed away.

In addition, thousands of veterans who served this nation honorably have been denied veterans status in New Jersey because they didn't serve in a specific time period, or in a combat zone. Legislation to change that situation has also been pending for many years and nothing happens. It seems the needs of New Jersey veterans who gave years of their lives to the country, and served honorably, are not given the same priority as those who broke the law by entering this country, and this state, illegally and reap the benefits.

Legislation which would benefit the state's veterans drags on for years, while legislation which benefits illegal immigrants gets passed relatively quickly. Could it be that those in the state legislature who can help our veterans just fail to do so, or is it politics as usual?

And there is the question as to the qualification of those who head the state committees on Military and Veterans Affairs both in the state Senate and state Assembly. Troy Singleton is a high level union leader who has been appointed to serve as Chairman for the state Senate committee. Cleopatra G. Tucker, is Director of The Centre, Inc., and serves as Chairman for the state Assembly committee. Neither one is a veteran. What in their background qualifies them to oversee, or even understand issues pertaining to veterans?

Veteran organizations in New Jersey have a choice, either put pressure on those in Trenton to pass legislation that benefit all our veterans, or sit idly by and watch our veterans continue to be devalued in favor of illegal immigrants.