



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Sen. Young Decries Gov's "Raid" of Snowmobile Fund

CATHARINE YOUNG February 12, 2010

ALBANY – Senator Catharine Young (R,I,C – Olean) today called on Gov. David Paterson to stop a raid into the state's dedicated snowmobile fund.

In his state budget proposal, the Governor has directed a \$1 million sweep from the Snowmobile Trail Development and Maintenance Fund into the State's General Fund, along with an additional plan to change the Fund's scope and purpose.

"The Governor made a promise in 2008 to keep his hands out of the cookie jar and use this fund solely for promoting and improving snowmobiling in this state," Sen. Young added. "Sadly, the Governor has broken that promise and sees this dedicated fund as just one more source of income to fill budget holes."

"Snowmobile registration fees are supposed to be dedicated toward trail maintenance and development, which in turn boosts our economy," said Sen. Young. "Snowmobiling is a big business because it attracts so many visitors who stay in our hotels, eat at our restaurants, shop in our stores and buy our gas."

"There have been improvements and increases in funding for the trails over the last few years, but only because snowmobilers agreed to have their registration fees increased with the expectation that the funds be used solely for the benefit of the industry," said Sen. Young. "This is a pure money grab that will further cripples upstate's economic recovery."

In addition to the raid, the Governor would allow the Division of Budget to access 30% of the remaining Fund's balance and expand its purpose from exclusively maintaining and developing snowmobile trails, to support any other "recreational" activity on state land. This would include funding to be used for maintenance or development of hiking trails, tennis courts, snowplowing equipment, road re-pavement, or any State park facility used to supplement recreational activity.

Steve Smith, Vice President of the Chautauqua Lake Snowmobile Club, said "It takes a lot to maintain these trails and keep them safe. Our registration fees go to everything from grooming trails and fixing broken bridges, to offering safety courses and buying new and improved equipment. Clubs throughout this state have worked hard to keep this Fund credible and it should not be used to help offset New York's budget crisis."

According to the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the Snowmobile industry contributes more than \$875 million to the state economy each year. New York has more than 11,000 miles of groomed trails for snowmobile use which are maintained by 237 local clubs through the Snowmobile Fund.

"Too many people in Albany underestimate how popular, how well-organized, and how economically important the snowmobiling community is in upstate New York. Our snowmobilers bring much needed dollars into our local economy. I am seriously concerned that a raid on the trail fund will hinder the ability to adequately maintain the trail system and jeopardize our small businesses," said Sen. Young.

There are over 121,000 registered snowmobiles registered in New York State. The registration fee for snowmobiles is \$45 if you are a member of a NAYS Snowmobile Association (NYSSA) club. If you are not a NYSSA member, the registration fee is \$100.

Sen. Young will be attending the Chautauqua Lake Snowmobile Club's "All-Club Ride-In" on Sunday, February 14 at 2 p.m.

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