



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Senator Ritchie Votes to Honor Veterans

PATTY RITCHIE March 15, 2011

| ISSUE: **VETERANS**

Includes Bill To Regulate Protesters Disrupting Military Funerals

State Senator Patty Ritchie voted today for a package of bills to honor veterans, including a bill to make it more difficult for protesters to disrupt the funerals of America's fallen heroes.

“At a time when our military’s men and women are fighting and sometimes dying in the defense of our nation, I believe we have a responsibility to insure that their loved ones are able to bury them without harassment from outside protesters,” Senator Ritchie said.

While the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that protesters have First Amendment rights to conduct protests, it also established that communities can regulate protests to insure that the rights of grieving families are safeguarded. This legislation establishes a buffer zone and requires protesters to obtain a permit and post a bond.

Protesters would be required to obtain a permit from the New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs.

The bill, S.3901 requires protesters to keep a respectful distance from the family and friends

during wakes, memorial services, funerals, burials and processions.

Groups holding protests within 2,500 feet would be required to obtain a permit and stay at least 500 feet away.

Senator Ritchie also supported a package of bills in honor of veterans and active service members, including:

- S1728 to make desecrating the burial place of a veteran a felony.
- S1431 to direct the Adjutant General to present a United States flag to the person burying a member of the organized militia.
- S1504 Prohibits the unauthorized sale of veterans commemorative property by cemeteries.
- S2424A Establishes the New York state veterans cemetery act.
- S3484 Extends a recruitment incentive and retention program for the New York Army National Guard, Air National Guard and naval militia