



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Senator Ritchie Statement on End of Legislative Session

PATTY RITCHIE June 27, 2011

| ISSUE: **AGRICULTURE, LABOR, LOCAL GOVERNMENT, RECREATION AND TOURISM, GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS**

Agreement on property tax relief ‘caps’ year when Albany started working again

The 2011 legislative session, my first as the State Senator representing Oswego, Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties, will be remembered as the year Albany started working again.

Partnering with our new Governor, Andrew Cuomo, we kept our promise to reduce taxes and spending, and took the first steps toward putting New York on a new path to better jobs and a stronger economy.

We passed an on-time budget and historic ethics reform to rebuild New Yorkers’ trust and confidence in their government and elected officials.

We “capped” it all off with a two-percent property tax cap that provides certainty and relief to homeowners and businesses, and will stop the flow of families, businesses and jobs out of New York.

As Senate Agriculture Committee Chair, I listened to farmers and fought to help them meet the challenges they face. Even as we reduced overall state spending, I worked to restore millions of dollars in budget cuts that would have eliminated many key programs that help make family farms profitable, and protect our rural communities.

I worked to mitigate the impact of budget cuts on our local schools, securing an additional \$4 million for schools in Central and Northern New York, and a plan for even more as our economy improves next year.

In my first session, I focused my efforts on cutting red tape, and opening new lines of communication between my constituents and their government.

I authored 45 bills, including five new laws, to benefit local communities in the 48th Senate District, help businesses and individuals wade through the state's vast bureaucracy, and help create jobs by creating opportunity and strengthening our local economy.

Many of these initiatives came from ideas submitted by my constituents, and show that I am keeping my promise to listen to the people I serve in Oswego, Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties.

There is a great deal more work to be done to get our economy moving, create jobs and get New Yorkers back to work. I believe that this session was a strong start, and a down payment on my commitment to make our communities stronger.

*Following is a partial list of legislation sponsored by Senator Ritchie in the 2011 session. A complete list of Senator Ritchie's sponsored legislation is available at www.ritchie.nysenate.gov.

Cutting red tape

Black River Taxpayers—My first new law cut through red tape that was costing taxpayers in the southern Jefferson County towns of Champion, LeRay, Pamela and Rutland over \$100 a day—hundreds of thousands of dollars in total—in extra, unnecessary interest payments.

(Chapter 15)

Streamlining government—I worked with the new state Agriculture Commissioner on a bill that boosts local soil and water conservation districts, and simplifies oversight of pollution control programs. The bill's benefits would extend to Fort Drum, and help keep the post a viable and growing part of the North Country economy. (S.4718)

Scales law—A new law I sponsored repeals an outdated requirement for groceries to install a multitude of scales for customers to verify package weights (Chapter 43), providing real cost savings to businesses.

Jail crowding relief—Requires the state to move parole violators out of county jails within 10 days to ease overcrowding in local facilities and cut expenses for county taxpayers. (S.5498)

DA stenographers—My bill removes an arcane requirement that made it harder for the Jefferson County District Attorney to find qualified stenographers for legally required court work. (Chapter 44)

Creating jobs

Expanding foreign trade—A bill that expands Ogdensburg's Foreign Trade Zone to include all of St. Lawrence County will help attract manufacturers and shippers to the region. The bill exempts products from taxes until their final destination in the US or abroad. (S.5225).

Wine in desserts—A tasty bill that will encourage more wine and grape production, as well as manufacturing. This new law allows companies to use wine up to five percent alcohol by volume in any frozen dessert. (Chapter 42).

Helping family farms

Restored budget cuts—As Agriculture Committee Chair, I worked to restore over \$3 million in funding cuts to vital farm programs that help boost farmers' bottom lines. These included

programs that benefit dairy and crop farmers, key to the rural economies in Central and Northern NY.

Regulatory relief—A comprehensive proposal to repeal duplicative and overly burdensome regulations, taxes and fees and provide real relief for hardworking farmers. (S.4340)

Ag assessments—Another red tape-cutting bill would remove the requirement that farmers reapply every year for agricultural land exemptions. (S.5159).

Boosting maple farming—I sponsored a pair of measures to exempt maple producers from industrial pollution and building code requirements that would add unnecessary expense to these entirely seasonal operations, and help boost maple production. (S.5499, S.3542).

“Blue cards”—I am working to eliminate the outdated requirement that farmers carry “blue cards” that list the names of every road on which they operate their farm equipment. DMV already limits the areas in which farm vehicle may be operated, and the requirement is duplicative. (S.5262)

Supporting sportsmen

Hunting and fishing “gift cards”—The Senate passed my bill to create “gift cards” redeemable for hunting and fishing fees. The bill is aimed at boosting outdoors sports, especially among young people and future generations, by encouraging sportsmen to “give the gift of the outdoors” to friends, family and co-workers. (S.5161)

UTV registrations—The battle to “legalize” UTV’s continues, as the Senate passed my bill that permits the registration of these increasingly popular, family-friendly, side-by-side recreational vehicles, which are used by farmers, many seniors and families in a way that has minimal impact on the environment. (S.3318)

Public safety

“Search and Rescue” teams—Volunteer Search and Rescue teams would get an official stamp of approval, with increased training, standards and credentials, under my bill, which passed the Senate. The teams play a critical role in helping law enforcement and emergency responders locate missing persons in wilderness areas of the state, but also increasingly in responding to cases of missing adults in urban and suburban communities. (S.3552)

“Mark’s Law”—My proposal to increase the penalties for assaults on firefighters, EMTs and other emergency responders—inspired by the horrific murder of EMT Mark Davis—gained support from 1000 locals who signed my online petition, as well as statewide organizations that represent the emergency services. (S.4717)

Air medical transport—The Senate passed my bill to clear the way for the return of air medical transport service to Central and Northern NY four years after Fort Drum discontinued the service. (S.4712)

Sex abuse counseling—My bill would require that sex offenders should be liable for the cost of counseling and treatment for their victims. This was another bill inspired by a true-life case in our region, and suggested by a constituent. (S.3319)

“Next of kin” registry—This bill would let motorists list names of next of kin on their driving record, to facilitate police and emergency responders making faster contact in case of an emergency. (S.5276)

Veterans and military

Property tax exemption for reservists—The Senate passed my bill that would allow local governments to provide the same property tax exemption to reservists as is currently available to active duty military. (S.5231)

