



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Senator Ritchie Calls on Albany to Reverse Changes to Test Schedules

PATTY RITCHIE August 30, 2011

| ISSUE: **EDUCATION**

### 11th Hour Changes Wreak Havoc on School, Family Calendars

Senator Patty Ritchie is calling on the state's Education Commissioner and Board of Regents to reverse an 11th hour change to school testing dates that's wreaking havoc on school and family calendars.

In a letter to state Education Commissioner John King and Regents Chancellor Merryl Tisch, Senator Ritchie admits she was flabbergasted that the state would change the test schedules so close to the start of the school year, when districts had already set—and in many cases, mailed—their school year calendars to parents and teachers.

The new schedule places a key test smack in the middle of spring breaks scheduled by a majority of Central and Northern New York schools.

"The new date for this very important exam, announced one week prior to start of the new school year, will force 20 of the 29 school districts I represent to change their academic calendars and the date of their spring break vacation," Senator Ritchie said.

“I am dumbfounded that your agency would make such a sweeping change, affecting the plans of tens of thousands of parents, students and families, with so little advance notice,” Senator Ritchie said. “Administrators have told me that, though difficult and potentially costly to their districts, they can make the schedule change—but not, in the words of one, without looking “foolish” to taxpayers and parents. Frankly, I agree, and believe that this notice defies all our efforts to implant common sense and responsiveness into state government.”

Schools were notified by the Aug. 26 memo that the dates for the Grades 3-8 English Language Arts exams would be changed to April 17 and 18. Every school in Jefferson and Oswego County, as well as hundreds of others across the state, had previously scheduled their spring breaks during that week, and have already issued calendars to parents and teachers to that effect.

Upon learning of the new dates from several concerned school superintendents, Senator Ritchie on Monday directed her staff to contact the official responsible for the date change but, ironically, was told the official was on vacation and unavailable this week.

Senator Ritchie is asking the state to reconsider the change, or at least provide more flexibility to local schools with regard to make-up exams so that they won't have to change their schedule.

Senator Ritchie's letter to state education officials can be found here:

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/63584822/Spring-break-letter-to-SED>