



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Senator Patty Ritchie 2011 Year in Review

PATTY RITCHIE December 19, 2011



I listened to the people of Central New York and Northern New York and stood up to cut taxes, stop runaway spending and bring common sense to Albany—all part of an effort to get New York back on track, create jobs and more opportunity. In the end, as the *New York Post* declared, “the taxpayers” are the winners.

Making Government Work Again

TAX CAP – Protects homeowners and property taxpayers by setting a strict limit on annual tax increases.

MIDDLE CLASS TAX CUT – Cut taxes on nearly 100,000 middle class taxpayers in Central and Northern NY to their lowest rate in 58 years, saving \$200 to \$400 for a typical taxpayer.

NO NEW TAXES – Enacted a balanced, on-time budget without new taxes or borrowing.

CUT SPENDING – Reduced spending in the state budget for the first time in 15 years.

MANDATE RELIEF – Rejected new mandates, and voted to eliminate dozens more, saving taxpayers \$127 million a year. Senator Ritchie’s three-county Mandate Relief Working Group is leading the way by recommending additional mandates and red tape that can be trimmed to save taxpayer dollars.

Creating Jobs

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GRANTS – I voted to create the regional economic development councils that resulted in two, separate, \$103 million grant awards to the Central and North Country regions that include Oswego, Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties. These funds will be used to jumpstart “shovel-ready” projects in local communities that will create jobs now.

JOB FAIRS -- I sponsored two, well-attended job fairs in Ogdensburg and Fulton, where over 800 local job-seekers got to spend some time with employers. (Over 100 reportedly found new positions).

HELPING JOB SEEKERS -- I created an online Jobs Bank with links to tens of thousands of jobs locally and across the state, and advice for job seekers, to help more Central and Northern New Yorkers find the positions they want.

Building for Our Future

HOUSING – I worked closely with state and local officials to help ease the housing crunch that impacts Jefferson County and military families, threatening our growth. My efforts included working on a funding plan with Jefferson County officials, obtaining state matching funds, and convincing Albany to make our military and non-military housing needs a top priority.

Supporting Our Schools

SCHOOL AID – Restored \$4 million in cuts to public schools in Central and Northern New York.

Stepping Up for Our Communities

SAVED OUR PRISONS – Worked to protect jobs at state prisons in the region, and none were included on closure lists that affected other parts of the state.

PROTECTING SUNY CANTON – Led the effort to preserve the unique identity and independence of two of our premier public colleges, at Canton and Potsdam, by fighting plans to merge the school administrations, even while insisting on finding ways to save money.

Standing Up for Agriculture

AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE CHAIR – I was named chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, giving me the honor of serving as one of the state’s top advocates for New York State’s 36,000 family farms.

FUNDING – Worked to successfully stop proposed elimination of funding for critical agriculture industry programs that help farmers hold their bottom line.

LISTENING TO FARMERS – Created a three-county Agriculture Advisory Board to bring the farmers’ perspective to discussion and debate on statewide agricultural issues.

STATEWIDE FORUMS – I hosted a series of agricultural forums across the state to hear ideas that can help family farms and farm businesses grow.

Closer to You

DISTRICT OFFICE – Opened the first full-time State Senate offices in decades in Oswego and St. Lawrence Counties, bringing government closer to you. My Mobile District Office program visited seven communities, offering after-hours help to constituents throughout my rural district.

INTERNATIONAL BORDER CAUCUS – As the State Senator with the longest stretch of Canadian border, I organized an International Border Caucus which is bringing New York State legislators together with Ontario and Quebec provincial and national representatives to identify border issues—like the case of the American boater detained for fishing in Canadian waters and many others—and find joint solutions.

Restoring Common Sense

STANDING UP – I’ve tried to stand up for people who don’t have anywhere else to turn, whether its Amish business people who receive threatening letters because they haven’t filed their taxes using a computer or an elderly woman who was forced to give up her Gold Star license plates in honor of her son who died in Vietnam.

OVERREGULATION – I stood up for local communities against Albany’s efforts to regulate children’s games like kickball and red rover and, by doing so, helped make Albany better understand what’s unique about our small towns in rural New York.

HEALTH CRISIS - After a little girl died in Oswego County, I brought the state’s top experts together on Eastern Equine Encephalitis to find ways to protect public health and safety.

Legislation

47 – Bills sponsored

26 – Passed Senate

13 – Enacted into law

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)

Scales law – My new law repeals an outdated requirement for groceries to install numerous electronic scales for customers to verify package weights (Chapter 43), providing real cost savings to businesses.

Business permits – Worked with the agriculture commissioner on his top priority to reform and reduce paper work rules for commercial nurseries (Chapter 73).

Creating jobs

Expanding foreign trade – Expanded the Ogdensburg Foreign Trade Zone to include all of St. Lawrence County to help attract manufacturers and shippers to the region. The bill exempts products from taxes until their final destination in the US or abroad (Chapter 364).

Wine in desserts – To encourage more wine and grape production, as well as manufacturing, the new law allows companies to use wine up to five percent alcohol by volume in any frozen dessert. (Chapter 42).

Commercial Equine Operations – Recognizes the growing importance of horse-related businesses in rural areas by extending some of the same tax and other benefits of other farmers. (Chapter 38)

Helping Farmers

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. (Chapter 201)

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

Farm 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)

Handicap Hunting – Allows “wounded warriors,” elderly and disabled hunters to use an ATV to go to their hunting site on state land. (S.5230)

Public safety

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)

“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-A)

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-A)

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 to allow local governments to provide the same property tax exemption to reservists as is currently available to active duty military. (S.5231)