



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Highlights Senate's Budget Goals

PATTY RITCHIE March 12, 2012

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Jobs, Property Tax Relief, EPIC, Rural Schools, EEE Top List; Plan Includes Funds to Protect Fort Drum

*** [A complete report on the Senate's budget can be found by clicking here.](#) ***

Those are among the initiatives included in the Senate's version of a budget plan that also included \$5 million in funding to help protect Fort Drum in a possible new round of BRAC cuts, and an ambitious proposal to help boost job creation and get New York's economy back on track.

The Senate plan continues to hold the line on spending—totaling less even than the proposal outlined in January by Gov. Cuomo—and includes no new taxes.

“Once again, the Senate is leading the way in keeping the promise to taxpayers to cut spending, reject new taxes, create jobs, and prioritize those programs and services that our communities want and need, especially those aimed at keeping and creating good jobs,” Senator Ritchie said.

The Senate was expected to pass its version of the budget today, while the Assembly is expected to also approve a competing plan. Both will serve as the framework for negotiations on a final budget, which is due April 1.

Here is a partial list of Senator Ritchie's priorities that are included in the Senate plan:

- €€€ the ambitious New Jobs NY program, that couples tax and regulatory relief with incentives aimed at helping New York's small businesses create thousands of new jobs, and \$5 million in funding to help safeguard the Army's Fort Drum, a critical part of the economy of Northern New York;
- * return of the STAR property tax rebates for homeowners aged 65 or better., averaging around \$500 for a senior homeowner. The rebates were eliminated in 2009, and Senator Ritchie has been working since she took office last year—including cosponsoring two bills—to reinstate the program;
- €€€ restoration of cuts to the EPIC prescription drug program that helps nearly 9,000 seniors in Oswego, Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties afford medicines they need;
- €€€ steering an additional \$200 million to public schools, and targeting the new aid at rural and high-needs district;

- €€€ \$150,000 in new state funding to help combat EEE, the mosquito-borne virus that killed an Oswego County tot last year. The money would be used to provide larvicide treatments that residents can apply to wetlands they own, increase vaccinations for horses, and boost the state's share of costs for aerial spraying. The measures all resulted from a Senate Roundtable on EEE, sponsored by Sens. Ritchie and Kemp Hannon, Chair of the Health Committee, and were included in the Senator's EEE Report earlier this year;
- €€€ full restoration of \$1.5 million in cuts to agriculture programs, like rabies prevention, marketing assistance for maple farmers and funding the Farm Viability Institute and North Country Agriculture—the second year in a row that Senator Ritchie has led in restoring agricultural programs;
- * funding through the Environmental Protection Fund for weed control in Lake Neatawanta in Fulton, Oswego County, and Black Lake, in St. Lawrence County, key recreation areas in the region.

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STAR property tax rebates and prescription drug assistance for seniors, increased state funding for rural schools and farmers, and a bigger role for the state in battling EEE are all among the Senate's top priorities for the new state budget due in just three weeks.