



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Sportsmen's 'Gift Cards' to Be Included in Budget

PATTY RITCHIE March 26, 2012

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### **Great Way to Give the Gift of the Outdoors, Promote Hunting, Fishing**

State Senator Patty Ritchie's idea to let New York State sell gift cards for hunting and fishing licenses will be included in the new state budget.

"Gift cards are an increasingly popular way for families and friends to share events, places and things they love, and will make a great way to share our love of the outdoors," Senator Ritchie said.

The new budget directs the Commissioner of Environmental Conservation to design a gift card program that will enable users to pay for hunting and fishing licenses and stamps. The provision was included at Senator Ritchie's request.

"Allowing New Yorkers to give the gift of our wonderful outdoors will help bring more people out to enjoy our rivers and lakes and the other wonders of Northern and Central New York," Senator Ritchie said. "New York State already allows people to purchase gift cards for camping permits and admission to State Parks. This bill will introduce more New Yorkers to outdoor recreation and increase the numbers of hunters and fishermen in our state."

Americans purchased nearly 8 billion gift cards in 2008, the most recent year for which statistics are available.

Last year, Senator Ritchie introduced legislation, S.5161, to create the sporting gift cards. That bill passed the Senate, but was not taken up by the Assembly.

"As a member of the Legislature's Sportsmen's Caucus, I have been working with hunters, anglers and many small business owners in Oswego, Jefferson and St. Lawrence County to find more ways to introduce New Yorkers to what we have in our region," Senator Ritchie said. "Few places in the world offer the number of rivers, streams and lakes that we have to offer, much less the scenic wonders of the Tug Hill Plateau, Lake Ontario, the St. Lawrence Valley or the Adirondack foothills."

"This will be a great way for families to introduce children to the sport of hunting, fishing, camping and other kinds of outdoor recreation," Senator Ritchie said. "Hunting and fishing already have \$1.5 billion impact on NY's economy. I believe this will help expand tourism opportunities and generate more visitors for our small businesses across Central and Northern New York's rural areas."