



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Dean G. Skelos

## Senate Passes Bill to Provide Search and Rescue Training for Volunteers Helping Forest Rangers

DEAN G. SKELOS April 19, 2012

The New York State Senate today passed legislation that allows for the creation of a training program for volunteers interested in assisting the search and rescue operations of state forest rangers. The bill (S.553), sponsored by Senator Betty Little (R-C-I, Queensbury), will enhance the safety of volunteers and the public during search and rescue operations in the Adirondacks, Catskills and other forested communities across the state.

“In times of crisis, it is always heartening to see caring people step forward to help,” said Senator Betty Little. “When someone is missing, that kind of assistance can be extraordinarily helpful in a region as expansive and remote as the Adirondacks. This legislation would establish a program with our forest rangers to ensure that these types of search and rescue operations are done safely and effectively with prepared and knowledgeable volunteers.”

“When someone is missing or in need of help in the remote areas of our state, it is crucial to have as many trained eyes and ears on the ground as possible to provide assistance,” Senate Majority Leader Dean G. Skelos said. “We are fortunate that there are groups of New Yorkers who want to volunteer their services for searches and rescues, and with this legislation, they can get important safety training and help our forest rangers save lives.”

Each year, the state Department of Environmental Conservation's forest rangers conduct over 200 search and rescue operations in remote and forested areas of the state. The assistance of trained and credentialed individuals and groups who volunteer to assist in searches would be highly valuable in providing additional resources to respond to emergency situations where lost or missing persons are in need of immediate assistance.

The bill enables the forest rangers to establish, direct and maintain a program for the purposes of training and credentialing volunteer wild land search and rescue personnel to assist and respond with forest ranger forces to search for lost and missing people in remote and forested areas of the state. The New York State Federation of Search and Rescue Teams requested the legislation.

The bill will be sent to the Assembly where it is being sponsored by Assemblyman Bill Magee.