



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Bill Would Stop Fugitives From Collecting Welfare

PATTY RITCHIE June 21, 2012

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Bipartisan Measure Prompted by Oswego Case of Absconder Who Was on Welfare

Senator Patty Ritchie, continuing her efforts to crack down on welfare fraud and abuse, announced Senate passage last night of her bipartisan bill to prevent wanted fugitives from collecting public assistance. The measure, co-sponsored by Senator David J. Valesky, and sponsored in the Assembly by Assemblyman Will Barclay, was sparked by an arrest in Oswego County of a man—found carrying a New York welfare benefits card—wanted in two states on attempted murder, kidnapping and weapons charges. “Breaking the law, and then living off New York taxpayers while you’re on the lam, is just plain wrong. And we have the ability to prevent it,” said Senator Ritchie. “My bill, which has strong bipartisan support in the Senate, will help ensure that taxpayer-paid benefits only go to those who truly need—and deserve—them.”

The measure comes on the heels of a second bill, also passed this week, that would stop the use of welfare benefits to purchase liquor, tobacco and lottery tickets, and from being used in casinos and adult entertainment clubs.

“These bills help protect the integrity of our state’s public assistance programs by making sure benefits are going to those who are truly in need of assistance—not people who are trying to scam the system, or who simply want to live their lives on the backs of hardworking taxpayers.”

“Public assistance benefits are meant for law-abiding individuals who are truly in need, not for those who flee from charges,” said Senator Valesky. “This legislation will protect those in need and also provide another tool for law enforcement to get dangerous criminals off the streets.”

Late last year, Edward Lamar Moses was arrested after he presented Fulton Police with a New York welfare ID card, that was found to match outstanding warrants from South Carolina and Georgia.

Senator Ritchie’s measure, S.6156, would amend the executive law and the social services law to require the Division of Criminal Justice Services to check the wanted felon status and probation or parole violator status of people applying for public assistance.

Currently, both federal and state law prohibits people who know they are fleeing felons and those who are knowingly violating probation or parole from receiving public assistance. However, there is no law in place to ensure that applicants are investigated to find if they are in violation.

In the past, New York’s Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance worked with the state Division of Criminal Justice Services to check if an applicant was a fleeing felon. However, a court ruled in *Fowlkes v. Adamec* that a specific law was required to be passed to allow the checks.

The bill was sent to the Assembly.