



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie, Griffo, Little Announce \$100,000 Grant for Fire Training Center

PATTY RITCHIE October 18, 2012

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Funding To Help 40 Volunteer Fire Departments Train New Recruits

State Senators Patty Ritchie, Betty Little and Joe Griffo announced they have obtained a \$100,000 grant from New York State to help replace the aging fire training tower used to train St. Lawrence County's volunteer firefighters.

"St. Lawrence County's volunteer fire departments currently have no training facility where their new volunteer firefighters can obtain the training they need before they can go inside burning buildings to fight fires and save lives," said Senator Ritchie. "When representatives of the fire service came to me and told me our volunteers are being forced to travel outside the county to get the training they need, I promised I would work with my Senate colleagues to get them the help they needed."

"While other parts of the state have paid professional fire departments to respond to emergencies, St. Lawrence County relies on unpaid volunteers who leave their families at all hours of the day and night to

help their neighbors when disaster strikes,” Senator Griffo said. “As the largest geographic county in New York State, encompassing many sparsely populated rural communities, traveling for educational training can be a real hardship for the more than 40 different volunteer fire companies that serve the 32 towns and 14 villages across St. Lawrence County.”

“With the difficulties of recruiting people willing to donate their time to risk their lives as volunteer firefighters, the extra travel time to obtain their certification can take a toll among those who are offering to serve their communities,” said Senator Little. “During the winter months, a four-hour commute for training during a snowstorm or ice storm is too much to ask of even dedicated volunteers.”

"The St. Lawrence County fire training center's 'live fire' burn simulator was closed four years ago after it was determined it was no longer safe. The building had been set on fire more than 300 times over almost three decades to train volunteers on inside fire firefighting techniques," said St. Lawrence County Fire Training Fundraising Co-Chairs Dale Gardner and Robert Kerr. "When we needed help we asked Senator Ritchie to go to Albany to see if she could obtain state assistance for this project. On behalf of the volunteer fire service, we are grateful to Senator Ritchie, Senator Griffo and Senator Little for their help." Classes of 20 student firefighters, four instructors and a safety team of six experienced firefighters, two fire engines, a pumper and an ALS ambulance must now travel to Franklin, Lewis and Jefferson counties to obtain the mandated training they need before they can enter burning buildings.

The new facility will improve training over the old simulator because it will have more rooms and provide experience in fighting fires inside basements and on second-floor fires.

(Pictured in the above photo are St. Lawrence County Fire Training Chair Ronald Bertram of Hammond, State Senator Patty Ritchie, Fire Training Fundraising Co-Chair Robert Kerr, Fire Training Center Treasurer Daniel Basford of Heuvelton)