



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Ritchie Gets 'Schooled' at Annual St. Lawrence Maple Event

PATTY RITCHIE January 25, 2014

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State Senator Patty Ritchie "got schooled" at the annual "Maple School" hosted by the St. Lawrence County Maple Producers Association and the local FFA.

The event, held Saturday at Gouverneur Central School, drew nearly 100 current and aspiring maple producers from across the North Country to learn from experts and fellow farmers about the age-old springtime tradition of sugaring, as well as new techniques to

improve production and quality.

As Chair of the State Senate Agriculture Committee, Senator Ritchie has secured funding in each of the past three years to help promote New York's maple sugar industry, and to support research that helps producers grow and succeed. The funding totaled \$325,000, and was part of the Senator's effort to reverse agricultural funding cuts in the state budgets that occurred prior to her taking office.

The new budget proposal once again cuts funding for maple producers, and Senator Ritchie said she would work to find money to restore that cut as well.

New York is the nation's 2d leading producer of maple syrup, and St. Lawrence County is at the center of the state's "maple belt," which also includes Jefferson and Lewis Counties.

Still, the potential exists to dramatically boost the state's production. Only about 1 percent of 300 million maple trees are tapped for syrup each spring, compared to about one-third of all maple trees in neighboring Quebec.