



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Senate Ok's Ritchie's Jefferson County Jail Sharing Bill

PATTY RITCHIE May 21, 2014

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Measure Would Let Watertown, Other Local Police Use County Lockup for Detainees, Cuts Costs to Taxpayers

The State Senate Wednesday approved a shared-services bill authored by Senator Patty Ritchie that would allow Watertown and other local police to once again use the Jefferson County jail to hold detainees prior to their arraignment.

The bill (S.7138) fixes state law to allow the special holding arrangement. Once approved by the Assembly and signed into law by the Governor, the county and city need to reach a mutual agreement to resume that arrangement.

“The state is challenging local governments to find ways to share services, cut costs and provide relief for local taxpayers,” Senator Ritchie said.

“This bill is a good example of how government at every level can work together—and work quickly—to find sensible solutions that improve efficiency and reduce costs.”

For more than two decades, the county had shared space at the jail for pre-arraigned city detainees, but the State Commission of Correction, which oversees local jails, vetoed the arrangement, citing an older state law. As a result, city police had to make other arrangements for holding pre-arraigned suspects and, for the past month, used a specially

constructed facility at City Hall.

Senator Ritchie's bill is not limited only to Watertown police; the county may also make similar deals with other police agencies in Jefferson County.

The bill was sent to the Assembly for action.