



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Ritchie: Measure to Help Find Vaccine for Eee Gets Final Passage

PATTY RITCHIE June 9, 2014

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### **Legislation Will Create 21<sup>st</sup> Century Workgroup for Disease Elimination and Reduction**

State Senator Patty Ritchie has announced her legislation (S.2115) to help find a vaccine to prevent the deadly EEE (Eastern Equine Encephalitis) disease has passed the State Senate.

The bipartisan measure will create the 21st Century Workgroup for Disease Elimination and Reduction within the state Department of Health. The group, comprised of experts in diseases, infection and public health, will be tasked with pushing for the development of effective vaccines against diseases, including EEE, West Nile Virus and Lyme. Included in the new State Budget is \$100,000, secured by Senator Ritchie to fund the new workgroup.

“In Central New York, we’ve seen firsthand the deadly effects of diseases like EEE. While they have been devastating, they have also served as reminders that we need to be vigilant in our fight against EEE and similar diseases to help prevent future tragedies,” said Senator Ritchie. “When it comes to modern medicine, vaccines are tremendous public health tools. Through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Workgroup for Disease Elimination, experts at the top of their field will work towards developing vaccines that will help save lives.”

Following the death of Oswego County’s 4-year old Maggie Sue Wilcox from the EEE virus in 2011, Senator Ritchie has been leading the effort to raise awareness of the disease and find ways to stop its spread, including pushing for the creation of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Workgroup for Disease Elimination.

“The loss of our Maggie Sue was the most devastating experience of our lives and we struggle with that on a daily basis; in part because we strive to find the very difficult balance in protecting our other children from EEE and in learning how to educate them without making them afraid to go outside and be carefree children,” said Donna Wilcox, Maggie Sue’s aunt.

“Our goal has and will continue to be to work towards the realization of a human vaccine for this deadly virus. Senator Ritchie's legislation, her success in finding the funds necessary to protect Upstate New Yorkers and the creation of the 21st Century Workgroup for Disease Elimination and Reduction are gigantic leaps forward in the search for the vaccine that could not have been made without her tireless efforts. Words cannot adequately express how grateful we are for her dedication and hard work.”

EEE affects horses and other livestock, and rarely occurs in humans. Five human deaths in New York since 1971 all have occurred in Oswego and Onondaga Counties, while dozens of horses have succumbed to the virus.

Over three years, Senator Ritchie has secured a total of \$700,000 in additional state budget funds for EEE prevention; including support this year for programs to educate children and families about the dangers of EEE, free tire recycling events, a low-cost vaccination program for horses and additional mosquito control efforts.