



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Heading Back to School Without Breaking the Bank

PATTY RITCHIE August 25, 2014

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Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

It's hard to believe that in just a few short weeks, students will be starting a new school year. If you're a parent, you know that a big part of heading back to school is the shopping. As a mother and grandmother, I know that when you're buying everything from new sneakers to supplies, it can add up quickly. In fact, this year, the National Retail Federation estimates that families will spend an average of \$670 on back-to-school items.

For many families, buying clothing for growing children is a big expense when it comes to shopping for the new school year. Luckily, in New York State shoppers no longer pay state sales tax on clothing purchases up to \$110. This saves the typical family of four nearly \$200 per year. That being said, there are still steps you can take to help cut your expenses as your child prepares to head back to the classroom:

Shop at home first: Often times, we forget what we already have in our closets. Go "shopping" with your child in his or hers and you might discover items that you've forgotten about. Find items your child no longer needs? Make a pile and do a little good by dropping it off to your local thrift store.

Host a "back-to-school" swap: Invite parents with children who are the same age as yours to take part in a "back-to-school" swap. Each person brings items they no longer need—clothing, supplies, etc.—you'll cut your expenses significantly.

Track sales: Once you have your child's list of what he or she will need for the year, sit down and map out where you'll go for the best deals. Be sure to check out the ads in the Sunday paper and your email inbox for special promotions that can save you cash.

Plan ahead—way ahead: Find especially good deals on things like pencils, paper, markers and other necessities? Stock up and hide them away until the following year.

Making sure your child has the items he or she needs is just part of the equation when it comes to starting the school year off on the right foot. Luckily, our region is home to top-notch schools with excellent educators. As your State Senator, I've been working hard to support our local schools, and you can read more about my efforts on my website, www.ritchie.nysenate.gov. If you have a child who will be heading back to the classroom soon, I wish your family the best of luck as you embark on a year full of excitement and learning!