



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

New Support for Soldiers in 2015

PATTY RITCHIE January 5, 2015

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Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

Did you know that New York State is home to more than 892,000 men and women who have served their country? These former members of our military have given—and continue to give—so much to defend our freedom and contribute to our local communities. That's why it's so important to provide them with the support that recognizes their many sacrifices. In 2015, new laws are going into effect that aim to do just that:

Homeless Veteran Assistance Fund: This new law aims to assist homeless veterans with acquiring housing and housing-related expenses. The program will be funded via a new, dedicated tax check-off, which will enable New Yorkers to make contributions of any dollar amount when filing their personal income taxes.

Hire a Veteran Tax Credit: In 2015, a new measure which I supported will enable businesses to receive a tax credit for hiring and employing a qualified veteran. The credit is equal to 10 percent of the total amount of wages paid to the qualified veteran during his or her first full year of employment. The credit amount is increased to 15 percent if the veteran is disabled. Credits are capped at \$5,000 per veteran and \$15,000 per disabled veteran, with unused credit being carried forward to the following three years.

As the state senator representing Fort Drum, these measures go hand in hand with the work I've been doing to help support our troops, their families as well as to raise awareness of the post:

Funding for treatment of PTSD: In 2014, I was successful in securing \$185,000 to aid men and women suffering with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other combat related illnesses. This funding brings the two year total of funding aimed at supporting PTSD treatment programs in the Fort Drum area to nearly \$400,000;

Serving on the Council of State Governments “Task Force on Military and Veterans Affairs: As part of this nationwide group comprised of legislators and elected state leaders from across the country, I’m constantly looking at ways to improve services and outreach to veterans and active members of America’s military;

Enhancing Fort Drum: Recently, I fought for \$2 million in additional State Budget funding to protect Fort Drum and other military installations from defense cutbacks. Part of this funding was utilized to preserve farmland bordering the post, which serves as a “buffer zone” for military training areas, as well as to support health care initiatives in surrounding communities;

“10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Day”: For the past three years, I have hosted 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Day at the State Capitol. This annual event helps to familiarize my colleagues with the critical impact the post has not only on our region, but across our entire state.

Protecting the post: Most recently, in light of a proposal by the Army to assess the impact of reducing troop levels to numbers not seen since the beginning of World War II, I teamed up with the Fort Drum Regional Liaison Organization to collect more than 9,000 signatures on a petition in support of the post. If you haven’t signed the petition yet, you can do so at www.StandUpForFortDrum.com. I’ll be presenting any additional signatures at a local listening session, expected to take place this spring.

The past and present members of our military are true heroes who have made tremendous sacrifices for our freedom. As state senator, I’m looking forward to saluting them in 2015 by continuing to provide assistance to those in their post-military lives, supporting active duty troops and their families and protecting Fort Drum so that the post continues to thrive for many years to come.

