



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Give Life by Giving Blood

PATTY RITCHIE January 12, 2015

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### Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

One pint of blood—that's all it takes to save up to three lives, according to the American Red Cross. With someone being in need of blood every two seconds in the United States, giving blood is one of the easiest things you can do to help save lives.

This month marks National Blood Donor Month for the American Red Cross, a time when the organization recognizes the contributions made by those who donate blood and encourages others to follow in their footsteps. If you're thinking of donating blood this month, here are some things to consider:

***The weather effect:*** According to the Red Cross, many blood drives across the country have already been canceled this month due to inclement weather. In addition, seasonal illnesses like the flu often make it so individuals are unable to donate during the winter months. These factors mean it's even more critical that those who are able to donate do so.

***Every 56 days:*** Already donated? According to officials, it's safe to donate blood every 56 days. Keep in mind that in order to donate, you must be in good health, at least 17 years old (16 with parental consent), and weigh at least 110 pounds. Please note that high school students and other donors who are under the age of 18 must meet additional weight and height requirements.

***38 percent:*** That's the percentage of people in the United States who are eligible for donating blood. However, it's estimated that less than 10 percent of the population actually does so. According to the Red Cross, the most common reasons stated by people when asked why they don't give blood are that they've "never thought about it" and that they "don't like needles."

*A bonus health check:* When you donate, not only will you be helping save lives, you'll also get a "mini-physical," where your pulse, blood pressure, body temperature and hemoglobin will all be checked.

The reasons for donating blood run the gamut, from being asked by a friend to donate to simply feeling the need to give back and make a difference. If you'd like to donate, please call 1-800-RED-CROSS or visit [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org) for more information. This month, if you're able to, I encourage you to roll up your sleeve, donate blood and give the gift of life.