



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Praises Passage of Women's Equality Measures

PATTY RITCHIE January 12, 2015

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Legislative Package Aims to End Discrimination, Combat Sexual Harassment and Stop Domestic Violence

State Senator Patty Ritchie today is praising passage of legislation that will provide females across New York State with new protections when it comes to discrimination, sexual harassment and domestic violence.

The historic measures passed Monday mark the first legislative act of 2015 and are the components of a comprehensive Women's Equality Agenda, made up of bills that would stop human trafficking; ensure equal pay for equal work; combat sexual harassment in the workplace; end gender discrimination in employment, housing and credit decisions; make reasonable work accommodations available for pregnant

women; and provide stronger protections for domestic violence victims.

“In every corner of our state and across our nation, women are breaking glass ceilings and reaching new heights. However, we cannot turn a blind eye to the things that often hold them down—namely the discrimination, harassment and abuse that often happen in the workplace and in our society at large,” said Senator Ritchie.

“Today, I’m thrilled that we are moving forward with measures that will help women break through barriers and also be better protected from discrimination, sexual harassment and domestic violence. Through this landmark legislation, we’re providing every woman across New York State with increased opportunities to achieve success and we’re laying the groundwork so our daughters and granddaughters can follow in the footsteps of so many of today’s women who are achieving great things.”

In an effort to allow constituents to show support for the equal pay for equal work component of the Woman’s Equality Agenda, Senator Ritchie is inviting constituents to sign her “Equal Pay for Women” petition, available on her website, www.ritchie.nysenate.gov. To date, more than 1,000 of her constituents have signed the petition.

The below measures—which also passed the Senate in 2013 and 2014, but were not acted upon by the Assembly—were approved by the Senate on Monday:

- ***Ensuring equal pay (S.1)***: This legislation would ensure women receive equal pay for equal work by prohibiting employers from paying employees different amounts based on gender;
- ***Combating sexual harassment (S.2)***: This measure would help to ensure all employees are protected from sexual harassment by applying existing protections to businesses of all sizes;
- ***Removing barriers to remedying discrimination (S.3)***: This legislation would act to remove barriers to remedying discrimination by allowing for reasonable attorney’s fees in employment and credit discrimination cases when sex is a basis of discrimination;
- ***Stopping discrimination based on family status (S.4)***: Through this legislation, employers would be prohibited from denying work or promotions based on family status, such as parents and women who are pregnant;

- ***Preventing housing discrimination against victims of domestic violence (S.5)***: This legislation would prohibit housing discrimination against victims of domestic violence;
- ***Allowing electric filing for orders of protection (S.6)***: Sponsored by Senator Ritchie, this measure would improve safety for domestic violence victims looking to file orders of protection by allowing them to do so electronically. In addition, the legislation also requires the Office of Court Administration to review and update their services and policies for all crime victims in the courts;
- ***The Trafficking Victims Protection and Justice Act (S.7)***: This measure would prevent the exploitation of children and adults who are victims of human trafficking and would also toughen penalties against those who buy and sell young women, men and children; and
- ***Stopping pregnancy discrimination in the workplace (S.8)***: Through this measure, employers would be required to provide reasonable accommodations to employees with pregnancy-related medical conditions.

In addition to the above measures, legislation (S.5605) to strengthen orders of protection for domestic violence victims—which was originally part of the Senate’s Women’s Equality Agenda—was enacted into law in 2013.

All bills passed Monday have been delivered to the Assembly for further action.