



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## SENATE OKs RITCHIE BILL TO LET OGDENSBURG AIRPORT SOAR

PATTY RITCHIE June 17, 2015

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### **Simple Legal Fix Boosts Plan for Low-Cost Flights from ‘OGS’ to Florida and Beyond**

The Senate today approved legislation, backed by the Ogdensburg Bridge and Port Authority and sponsored by Senator Patty Ritchie, that helps open up tiny Ogdensburg Airport for a major low-cost airline that’s promising to offer cheap flights from the North Country to Florida and beyond.

The measure, S.5861, includes a simple legal fix to clarify OBPA’s legal power to issue bonds for upgrades to the authority-owned Ogdensburg International Airport, including a runway and terminal expansion needed to handle larger planes of Allegiant Air, which is proposing the new service that could draw as many as 40,000 Canadian travelers from Ottawa and other airports.

“The airport expansion will help strengthen Ogdensburg’s place as an international gateway, and also play a key role in revitalizing our economy and creating jobs,” Senator Ritchie said. “This simple fix to the OBPA’s bonding authority benefits North Country residents by creating economic opportunity, jobs and new travel options. It’s an important project that promises to improve the quality of life for residents of our region.”

OBPA has applied for federal funds to pay most of the cost of the \$18.5 million project at the airport, known by its three letter international airport code as “OGS.” OBPA wanted to clarify its bonding authority so that it can front some of the costs, as well as cover its required local share.

“The Authority would like to thank Senator Ritchie for her tireless efforts working towards the passage of this legislation and for her support of job-creating infrastructure projects in the North Country,” said OBPA Executive Director Wade Davis said. “This bill, when law, will enable the Authority to better compete for state and federal grants and bond for fiscally-prudent future capital projects which directly create and support private-sector jobs. Senator Ritchie’s efforts are greatly appreciated as the Authority strives to continue to be an economic driver in the North Country region.”

The Senate bill, a 23-word fix to OBPA’s existing statute, differs from a more complicated, 3,000-word version that was rushed through the Assembly earlier this month. Study of that bill found that it was largely unneeded, and the Assembly recalled its earlier bill, and passed Senator Ritchie’s version earlier this week.

“When OBPA first proposed legislation to dramatically transform the way it does borrowing, I stopped and asked the tough questions to ensure not only that the bill was needed, but also that their plans served the interest of taxpayers and the general public living in the North Country,” Senator Ritchie said. “My role as a state representative is to stand up for taxpayers and the public to find the answers, and protect our communities.”

Under Senator Ritchie’s bill, the OBPA can only issue bonds with the approval of the State Comptroller.

The bill will be sent to the Governor for his signature.