



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Memorial Day, 2011

PATTY RITCHIE May 23, 2011

Memorial Day provides an opportunity to reflect on the events of recent days, and the hard work and sacrifice of the men and women of our Armed Forces, and the veterans who have gone before.

I ask everyone to join with me in remembering, honoring and thanking those who serve to keep us free. Like the 10,000 men and women of Fort Drum who serve day after day in the mountains and deserts of Afghanistan to continue the work of dismantling terrorist networks that threaten our peace and freedom. They serve for little pay—and at tremendous personal risk—out of a deep patriotism and commitment to preserving our American way of life.

And the Oswego County Battle of the Bulge Veterans, a group of battle-hardened soldiers who took part in the bloodiest battle of WWII. Brothers in combat, they continue to serve their community as mentors, educators and leaders. Their patriotism, courage, service and dedication to country and community is what led me to select this group as my nominees for the Senate Veterans Hall of Fame.

These veterans join hundreds of others—Medal of Honor winners, enlisted men and officers—from across the state (and across the years) who inspire us all. You can learn more about the Veterans Hall of Fame on my website, www.ritchie.nysenate.gov.

Besides remembering and honoring our veterans, I have been hard at work on other issues that affect the men and women of our military, their families and veterans.

I am working closely with members of the Jefferson County Legislature to address a critical housing shortage for families and service members of Fort Drum's 10th Mountain Division who will soon be returning from Afghanistan.

The new housing will have an immediate impact of creating hundreds of jobs for skilled laborers and trades people, and make a major impact on what the US Army has identified as a key impediment to the expansion of Fort Drum, a major economic engine for our region. (The new soldier housing will also help permanent residents by relieving an apartment crunch in some areas, as military and non-military compete for scarce rentals. It also will have a ripple effect on the local economy for such things as building supplies, home furnishings, and other retail.)

In Albany, I'm also working for veterans and members of the military by supporting legislation that supports the men and women who serve. Some of those bills include:

- preserving tuition assistance for active members of the National Guard, Air National Guard and Naval Militia (S.2807-C);
- a measure to preserve the dignity of the families of fallen soldiers, sailors, Airmen and Marines, by creating a restricted zone to prevent those disrespectful protests that have occurred around funeral processions (S.3901);
- another bill that would make it a felony to desecrate the burial place of a military veteran (S.1728), and

- a new proposal that would authorize counties and towns to provide a property tax reduction for members of the Army, Navy, Air and Marine Reserves (S.5231).

That last measure, of which I am the prime sponsor, came from a suggestion by a local Reservist. If you have an idea for a new law that can benefit veterans and active duty military service members, I hope that you will drop me a letter, email, or post to my Facebook page to let me know. I would be glad to research the issue, and see if we need a new law.

These are just some of the issues I am working on in Albany for veterans, military service members, their families and all the hardworking residents of Oswego, Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties whom I represent as your State Senator.

This Memorial Day, as we remember those who have fallen and sacrificed for our freedom, I hope that we will also find time to thank those who continue to serve to keep us safe.