



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

MAKE EVERY DAY VETERANS DAY

PATTY RITCHIE November 7, 2011

When I saw the look on Ethel Barnes face last June when I returned her “Gold Star Mother” license plates, I was reminded why I originally went into public service.

State officials had repeatedly told the Central New York woman that the license plates that had served as our state’s tribute to her only son, Robert, who had died for his country in Vietnam in 1967, were gone and could not be replaced.

After Robert was killed while defending our freedom, our state government had issued his mother special Gold Star Mother license plates to honor his service and her family’s sacrifice as a memorial and tribute to her son. When Mrs. Barnes gave up driving, she was told to turn in her vehicle’s license plates. She asked if she could keep them as mementoes of her son, but was told that after proudly displaying the plates for 44 years, she needed to surrender them.

Like a lot of people who were outraged at this callous treatment of the mother of one of our fallen heroes, I felt Gold Star Mothers deserve better from our great Empire State. I worked with the new Commissioner of Motor Vehicles to have the plates replaced for Mrs. Barnes.

As your State Senator, I’ve devoted a lot of my time to trying to bring a little common sense to Albany’s bureaucrats, especially on behalf of our veterans and their families.

When I discovered last winter that members of our armed forces Reserves are not eligible for some of the same tax breaks as other veterans, I introduced a bill I'm pushing in the legislature to make sure they are treated fairly.

When I heard that efforts to introduce our Wounded Warriors to the joys of fishing at designated workshops faced bureaucratic hurdles, I cosponsored a bill to insure that they wouldn't need to buy a license before they could attend an introductory fishing event.

As the senator who represents Fort Drum and the members of the 10th Mountain Division, our nation's most deployed military unit, I feel I have a special responsibility to stand up for the families of the men and women who have repeatedly put themselves in harm's way so the rest of us can enjoy the benefits of our way of life.

That's why I feel it's important to remember and stand up for our veterans and their families on more than just holidays like Veterans Day. It's why I feel that as your elected representative I have a special responsibility to look out for our Wounded Warriors returning from Afghanistan and Iraq by remembering and honoring their service and special sacrifices.

On Veterans Day, our nation celebrates and remembers the important role our armed forces have played in guaranteeing our freedoms. As your representative, I intend to continue working on behalf of all of our veterans and their families as if every day was Veterans Day.

Here's some of the bills I've been supporting in the legislature on behalf of our veterans:

- * Custody rights (S.3228) – Protects the rights of deployed military personnel in custody disputes involving minor children;
- * Lifetime fishing for disabled vets (S.193) – Provides lifetime fishing licenses for permanently disabled, honorably discharged veterans;
- * Veterans property tax relief (S.3222) – Makes redeployed veterans eligible for property tax relief offered by towns and counties;
- * Cutting red tape (S.2497) – Makes it easier for veterans to apply for property tax benefits;
- * Care for children of deployed military (S.3192) – Simplifies the process of appointing temporary guardian for minor children during deployment;
- * Privacy protection (S.5337) – Prevents unauthorized use of a service member's name or image in commercials or ads;
- * Access to state lands (S.824) – Gives disabled vets broader access to state lands for recreation purposes.

Make every day Veterans Day by making it a point to thank those who have served our nation.