



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

NEW LAWS IN THE NEW YEAR: SENATOR RITCHIE'S WEEKLY COLUMN

PATTY RITCHIE December 28, 2015

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In New York State, with the new year will come a number of new laws, including those aimed at enhancing women's rights, cutting taxes for businesses and better protecting children. Here's a rundown of measures that will take effect in January of 2016:

Enhancing the rights of women: On January 19th, seven of the eight bills that make up the Senate's Women's Equality Agenda will go into effect, including the following:

Preventing human trafficking and protecting victims of the crime: This new law will help to prevent the exploitation of children and adults who are victims of human trafficking and will also toughen penalties against those who buy and sell young women, men and children (S.7);

Ensuring equal pay for equal work: This new law will help ensure receive equal pay for equal work by prohibiting employers from paying employees different amounts based on gender (S.1);

Stopping discrimination based on family status: Through this new law, employers will be prohibited from denying work or promotions based on family status, such as parents or women who are pregnant (S.4);

Preventing pregnancy discrimination in the workplace: Under this new law, employers will be required to provide reasonable accommodations to employees with pregnancy-related medical conditions (S.8);

Halting housing discrimination against domestic violence victims: As a result of this new law, housing discrimination against victims of domestic violence will be prohibited (S.5);

Stopping sexual harassment in the workplace: This new law will help to ensure all employees are protected from sexual harassment by applying existing protections to businesses of all sizes. Under prior law, people working at businesses with less than four employees could not file at harassment complaint with the state because small employers were exempt from the law prohibiting harassment (S.2); and

Removing barriers to remedying discriminations: This new law will 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 (S.3).

In addition to the above, the law that completed the Women's Equality Agenda—a measure I cosponsored that creates a pilot program enabling domestic violence victims to seek temporary orders of protection through electronic means, rather than having to appear in person—will take effect on April 1st.

In 2016, new laws that cut taxes for businesses also will go into effect. On January 1st, New York State's Business Income Tax Rate will be lowered from 7.1 to 6.5 percent, saving businesses a total of \$125 million. Also on January 1st, the state's small business exemption increases to five percent for sole proprietors and farmers with at least one employee and a federal adjusted gross income that does not exceed \$250,000. Exemption increases have been phased in since legislation was passed in 2013, and ultimately will save small businesses across the state a total of \$61 million.

Also going into effect in 2016 is a new measure I cosponsored to help children who are the victims of kidnappings be brought more quickly to safety. This new law (S.3520-A) better protects children by giving authorities immediate access to abuse and neglect records when a child is reported missing.

As we kick-off 2016, I wish you the best for a year that's safe, healthy, happy and full of new opportunities. Soon, I'll be heading back to Albany, where I'll be reconvening with my colleagues and continuing our efforts to make New York State a better place to live and work. If you have a suggestion to help us achieve this goal, I invite you to share it by emailing me at ritchie@nysenate.gov or by [clicking here](#).