



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## SENATE: BUDGET SHOULD INCLUDE \$3 MILLION TO PROTECT FORT DRUM

PATTY RITCHIE March 14, 2016

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State Senator Patty Ritchie announced that the state Senate has included \$3 million in its new budget plan to help protect and strengthen New York's military bases, including Fort Drum, from troop reductions and federal spending cuts.

It's the fifth year in a row that Senator Ritchie has led the effort to include state budget funding for "Base Retention." In four prior rounds, the budget has contained a total of \$12

million that's been used for land purchases to help in the creation of a protected training buffer around the post, to help meet housing needs, support local hospitals and health care in Watertown and other nearby communities and assist with Fort Drum-related local government planning.

"Fort Drum plays a major role in our region's economic and social fabric, as home to 18,000 troops and their families, providing thousands of civilian jobs and pouring over one billion dollars a year into our state and local economy," Senator Ritchie said.

"This funding—and funds included in prior year budgets—makes crystal clear that the Senate and New York State fully support Fort Drum and our other military installations, that we support their mission and that we value the contributions of the post's officers and soldiers to the communities that they call home.

"Over the next weeks until the adoption of the final budget, I will be working to convince the Assembly and the Governor to support this funding, and support the men and women posted to New York's most important military post, and the entire North Country community," Senator Ritchie said.

Part of that effort includes the annual "10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Day," the Senate's celebration of the post, its officers and soldiers and families, created and hosted by Senator Ritchie and held at the State Capitol to raise awareness of Fort Drum among legislators, state government leaders, visitors and staff.

This year's Fort Drum Day is scheduled for Tuesday, March 22. Due to Fort Drum Day's popularity, the military exhibits and demonstrations hosted by Fort Drum soldiers has been moved to a new and larger space in the "Well"—or central display area—of the Legislative Office Building.

Fort Drum Day also includes ceremonies and a formal address by the post's Acting Commander, Brigadier General Paul Bontrager, inside the ornate and historic Senate Chamber.

The new State Budget is due on April 1.