



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## SENATE CALLS FOR INCREASED FUNDING TO FIGHT RABIES EPIDEMIC

PATTY RITCHIE March 16, 2016

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Following the discovery of seven rabid skunks in the City of Watertown, and recent cases of potential human exposure in St. Lawrence and Oswego Counties, State Senator Patty Ritchie is announcing the addition of \$875,000 in new funding in the Senate's budget plan to fight and prevent the deadly disease.

The increase, coming on top of \$50,000 in funding proposed by the Governor, would set a new record for rabies prevention budget funding.

“As we continue to see more and more rabies cases pop up across the state—especially in our region—it’s becoming increasingly important to invest in efforts that stop its spread,” said Senator Ritchie.

“I’m pleased that once again this year, the Senate is making it a priority to protect public health by combating this deadly disease. From providing no-cost clinics that safeguard pets, to expanding programs that vaccinate wildlife, this funding would help us continue the work we’ve started to fight back against rabies and keep ourselves—as well as our pets—safe.”

With more than 2,300 cases reported statewide since 2010, rabies has been on the rise in New York State. In that time period, there were more than 140 cases throughout Jefferson, Oswego and St. Lawrence Counties, including 17 in 2015.

In recent years, Senator Ritchie has successfully advocated for more than \$2 million in increased funding to enhance rabies prevention efforts. This support has made possible over two dozen no-cost rabies clinics in the region Senator Ritchie represents, which have helped vaccinate more than 2,000 pets against the disease.

In addition, funds have also been used to expand an innovative rabies vaccine program organized by Cornell University, which utilizes low-flying planes to drop small packets—containing a vaccine, surrounded by a mixture of sugar, vegetable fat and other flavors—that are then consumed by animals, namely raccoons.

A deadly disease caused by a virus that attacks the central nervous system, rabies is almost always fatal once symptoms appear. While infected mammals can transmit rabies to humans and other animals, human cases of rabies are rare. Under New York State law, dogs,

cats and ferrets must receive rabies vaccinations to protect public health.