



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## RITCHIE: RECORD FARM FUNDING IN NEW STATE BUDGET

PATTY RITCHIE April 6, 2016

| ISSUE: **AGRICULTURE**



For the second year in a row, Senator Patty Ritchie has secured record funding to support New York’s all-important agriculture industry, averting millions of dollars in proposed cuts to farm programs and strengthening efforts to recruit the next generation of New York farmers.

The final state budget, enacted last week, restores more than \$12 million in budget cuts to farm programs. Restoring the cuts was listed as a top priority of Senator Ritchie’s “Planting Seeds” 2016 farm initiative, which she unveiled earlier this year.

The budget also includes funding for a new Cornell-run “Vets-to-Farms” program to connect veterans and soldiers returning from war zones to pursue careers in agriculture. The program envisions a series of farms across the state where veterans can receive hands-on training and experience in operating and owning a farm.

The final budget also includes funding for a third round of “Beginning Farmer” grants. The \$1 million grant program is open to farmers who are in business for less than 10 years, and provides help with purchase of land, building and supplies to help new farmers succeed.

“From producing the fresh food that ends up on our dinner tables to generating billions of dollars in economic activity for New York State annually, farmers have extremely important—and demanding—jobs,” said Senator Ritchie.

“Once again this year, we were able to secure record funding for agriculture that will help our state’s hardworking farmers as they continue the very important work they do to grow New York’s leading industry. Through restored and added funding for key programs and initiatives, we’re not only helping the farmers of today succeed, we’re laying the groundwork so tomorrow’s farmers have every opportunity to follow in their footsteps.”

Other highlights of the state’s farm budget include:

restoration of proposed cuts to dozens of farm programs, which support marketing, education, prevention of animal and plant diseases, and research;

a new “farm wage credit” to help boost farmers’ bottom lines by helping them control labor costs;

record funding for school-based FFA programs, which teach agriculture as well as leadership skills;

record funding for rabies prevention and treatment, following an alarming rise in the number of reported cases of wildlife rabies, particularly in Central and Northern New York;

renewed funding to fight Eastern Equine Encephalitis, a mosquito-borne illness that is fatal to horses, livestock and humans;

for a second year, supplemental state funding for the highly successful Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, connecting 100,000 low-income seniors—including 3,000 from Jefferson, Oswego and St. Lawrence Counties—to fresh foods at local farmers markets;

renewed funding for student loan forgiveness for beginning farmers, and for business and transitional planning services available to retiring and new farmers through Cornell's FarmNet;

restored cuts to important, farmer-led research that aims to reduce diseases and increase productivity and profits, through such organizations as the Farm Viability Institute and Northern New York Agricultural Development.

Since 2011, when Senator Ritchie assumed leadership of the Senate Agriculture Committee, she's delivered more than \$55 million in restored budget cuts and new funding for farm programs, above the amounts proposed in the Executive Budget, and has been honored to be recognized as a member of the New York Farm Bureau's Circle of Friends each year.

A complete list of farm programs funded in the new budget can be viewed by clicking on the link to the PDF file above.