



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## SENATE APPROVES RITCHIE BILL CLEARING EMPLOYMENT HURDLE FOR MILITARY SPOUSES

PATTY RITCHIE June 2, 2016



A bill sponsored by Senator Patty Ritchie that clears the way for spouses of soldiers at Fort Drum and New York's other military installations to find employment in professional fields that require a state license—a key recruitment and retention tool that Army leaders were eager to enact into law—was approved by the Senate today and is on its way to the Governor's desk to become law.

The measure (S.2947-A) makes it easier for military spouses to transfer certain professional

licenses from other states, in fields ranging from acupuncture to social work, engineering to nursing, interior design to pharmacy, among more than 40 others.

New York was the only state in the nation that didn't give special consideration for licensed professionals forced to move to be near their spouse who was serving at a military installation in the state.

"This bill was a top priority for our nation's defense leaders and leaders at Fort Drum because it makes life easier for members of the military and their families by creating more and better opportunities for them to succeed in the new communities where they are assigned," Senator Ritchie said.

"Not only is the measure a major win for military families, it will also benefit our region's economy by creating a new stream of employees for harder to fill jobs, as well as enhance our nation's overall security by providing an incentive for some of our most highly-trained soldiers to continue to serve our country."

Military families move 10 times more often than others, often crossing state lines that have different rules and protocols for professional licenses. This patchwork makes it harder for military spouses to find work to help support their families.

Senator Ritchie's bill speeds the application process for military spouses who hold professional licenses in a different state, and allows them to work up to six months while their applications are being reviewed. It also reduces by half any licensing fees for military spouses.

State officials will still review their training and work history to ensure that they meet New

York's own standards for the jobs they are seeking.

In recent years, top leaders at Fort Drum, and Defense Department officials shared with Senator Ritchie their strong support for the measure, which they view as a key tool to encourage trained and experienced military service members to reenlist.

She recruited an Army veteran, Assemblyman Felix Ortiz (D-Brooklyn), to sponsor the bill in the Assembly, where it passed unanimously.

“Supporting our military doesn’t end with just the men and women in uniform; we also need to stand behind the spouses, children and family members who every day encourage and support our warriors in their tough jobs defending our freedom.”

“I am proud to stand with Assemblyman Ortiz, and all my colleagues in the Senate and Assembly in this salute to the brave men and women of our military and their families.”