



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Senate Passes Mandate Relief Measure to Relieve Counties of Indigent Defense Costs

PATTY RITCHIE June 16, 2016

State Senator Patty Ritchie has announced legislation she cosponsors to provide counties she represents with millions of dollars in mandate relief by requiring the state to cover the cost of legal services for the poor has passed the Senate.

Under the measure (S.8114), the state would be required to absorb the full cost of “indigent defense” over the next seven years. It’s estimated it would save the three counties Senator Ritchie represents \$5.6 million a year, when fully effective.

“It’s unfair for the state to require our counties to foot the bill for services they are mandating they provide,” said Senator Ritchie. “I’m pleased to see the Senate pass this vitally important mandate relief measure, which will allow counties to more easily balance their budgets and lessen the burden on taxpayers.”

“Paying for indigent legal services is challenging for counties across New York State—including St. Lawrence County,” said St. Lawrence County Attorney Steve Button.

“This would not have happened in the Senate without Senator Ritchie stepping up to push forward and pass this unfunded mandate relief bill. St. Lawrence County clearly has a true champion of citizenry in Senator Patty Ritchie.”

A 1963 Supreme Court ruling requires governments to pay for an attorney for defendants who cannot afford to hire their own. Rather than paying the tab, New York passes most of the cost along to its local counties, causing severe strain on local budgets.

Recently, the state settled a lawsuit by agreeing to pay the full cost of indigent defense in just five counties, including Onondaga County in Central New York.

Senator Ritchie has been leading the push for mandate relief for local governments, including ending all unfunded mandates, like costs for indigent defense and her legislation to increase the share of profits local DMV offices receive for services they provide on behalf of the state.

The measure was sent to the Assembly