



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Ritchie Secures North Country Fire and Rescue Funding Tied to Protecting Future of Fort Drum

PATTY RITCHIE June 18, 2016



State Senator Patty Ritchie announced that she has secured \$650,000 in new state funding to purchase emergency radios and other critical emergency equipment for fire departments and first responders across Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties that serve Fort Drum and surrounding communities.

The funding is included in a \$1 million “Base Retention” grant that Senator Ritchie secured to help protect and defend the military post, the largest in the Northeast and a key employer

and economic engine for the region.

Funding is also being made available for Fort Drum protection and retention efforts by the Fort Drum Regional Liaison Organization (FDRLO), to support community health care access for Fort Drum soldiers and their families, and for Fort Drum-related assistance to local governments by the Development Authority of the North Country (DANC).

“Protecting Fort Drum and the important role it plays in our regional economy and local communities requires 24/7 commitment, just like the dedication that’s shown each and every day by our volunteer and professional firefighters and first responders,” said Senator Ritchie. “I’m proud that I am able to provide this funding that supports Fort Drum and its mission, supports our communities and builds stronger ties between the Army and the North Country to preserve the future of the post, its jobs and economic contributions.”

Jefferson County fire and ambulance companies will receive a total of \$542,000 to purchase new handheld radio equipment that will allow easier, faster and more efficient communication and coordination between different fire and ambulance companies, Fort Drum and other emergency responders. Forty-three fire companies will receive three radios each, while 16 ambulance companies will each receive one.

The new radios will help reduce the cost to local taxpayers of meeting the requirements of Jefferson County’s new emergency communications system.

Eighteen St. Lawrence County fire companies will receive \$90,000 for the purchase of emergency equipment, such as turnout gear. All the departments have mutual aid agreements to provide first response to Fort Drum.

“In a fire, accident or emergency, seconds count, and state-of-the-art communications will reduce response time, improve coordination and ultimately, save lives,” said Senator Ritchie.

“Once again, this funding is a great example of how we can support Fort Drum and strengthen services to residents in communities off-post.”

In addition, the total \$1 million grant also includes:

- \* \$300,000 to FDRLO to enable the organization to be positioned to defend Fort Drum in the event of another round of federal defense cuts;
- \* An additional \$18,000 is being provided to the Oxbow Volunteer Fire Department and Gouverneur Ambulance for the purchase of emergency equipment;
- \* \$50,000 for DANC to continue to provide municipal planning programs and services related to Fort Drum development;
- \* \$25,000 to the Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization (FDRHPO), and umbrella organization that serves to address challenges to health care access and delivery to the post and surrounding communities.

“The importance of protecting Fort Drum, which is our region’s greatest employer and home to thousands of soldiers and families, cannot be overstated,” said Jefferson County Legislature Chairman Scott Gray. “Funding secured by Senator Ritchie will not only help strengthen the post, it will also help our local emergency responders who serve Fort Drum and its surrounding communities operate more safely and save taxpayer dollars. We thank Senator Ritchie for recognizing the importance of these issues and for again, putting the North Country first.”

“The vitality of the North Country depends on the strength of Fort Drum and its ability to continue to not only to defend our Nation, but also to remain as a economic engine for our region,” said Mary Corriveau, FDRLO board chair. “FDRLO is one of Fort Drum’s biggest

champions, and its continued operation is critically important to protecting the installation. We would like to thank Senator Ritchie for securing this funding, and for being a strong advocate for the North Country—and Fort Drum.”

“Volunteer fire departments work extremely hard to make ends meet, and at the same time provide the vitally important services our communities depend on to stay safe,” said Brian Berkey, Adams Volunteer Fire Department Chief. “Funding secured by Senator Ritchie is truly invaluable and will help us respond to emergencies more quickly, more efficiently and will most certainly help us to save lives and keep our community safer.”

Senator Ritchie played a key role in creation of the military base retention fund in the State Budget, beginning in 2012. Since that time, more than \$3 million has been allocated for Fort Drum-related causes, including funding to North Country hospitals for upgrades and improvements, and to expand “buffer areas’ around the post’s perimeter to prevent overdevelopment near key training areas, among other needs.

Fire and ambulance companies eligible for funding under Senator Ritchie’s Base Retention Grant are as follows:

**Jefferson County fire departments:** City of Watertown, Adams, Adams Center, Alexandria Bay, Antwerp, Belleville, Black River, Brownville, Calcium, Cape Vincent, Carthage, Chaumont, Clayton, Copenhagen (Town of Champion), Deferiet, Depauville, Ellisburg, Evans Mills, Felts Mills, Fishers Landing, Fort Drum, Glen Park, Great Bend, Henderson, LaFargeville, Lorraine, Mannsville, Natural Bridge, North Pole, Oxbow, Pamela, Philadelphia, Plessis, Redwood, Rodman, Rutland, Sackets Harbor, Smithville, Theresa, Three Mile Bay, T/O Watertown, Wellesley Island, West Carthage.

**Jefferson County ambulance companies:** Alexandria Bay, Black River, Cape Vincent, Carthage, Evans Mills, Guilfoyle, Henderson, Indian River, Natural Bridge, Redwood, Sackets Harbor, South Jefferson, Three Mile Bay, Thousand Islands (TIERS), T/O Watertown, Wellesley Island.

**St. Lawrence County fire departments:** Brier Hill, Canton, De Kalb Junction, Edwards, Gouverneur, Hammond, Hermon, Heuvelton, Lisbon, Louisville #2, Madrid, Morley, Morristown, Ogdensburg, Pyrites, Rensselaer Falls, Richville, Waddington.