



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## A Look Back at the 2016 Legislative Session

PATTY RITCHIE June 29, 2016



Just recently, lawmakers in Albany closed the books on the 2016 Legislative Session. From building brighter futures for students to investments that are helping to grow much-needed jobs throughout our region, this year, I'm pleased to report that we were able to make real progress on issues that are important to the Central and Northern New York regions I represent. Highlights of the Legislative Session include:

***New opportunities for New Yorkers:*** We continued our work to create jobs, with a focus on key industries, like agriculture, which this year, again received record funding to help support

our hardworking farmers and allow them to expand their operations. In addition, the new state budget also included \$4.2 billion in tax cuts that will help to reduce taxes for thousands of businesses—as well as individuals—in every community statewide, as well as record funding for job training and workforce development initiatives.

***Helping students to succeed:*** We also fought for record funding for our schools, as well as finally did away with the GEA budget gimmick, which for years, put a severe strain on school budgets. State aid for schools in Oswego, Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties totaled a record \$554 million—which is \$32 million more than last year.

***Making mandate relief a priority:*** Mandate relief has always been a major priority for me, and we again took steps toward measures to provide significant relief to local government. For example, through legislation I cosponsored, the state will now be picking up the tab for legal services for the poor—saving our local counties millions of dollars annually. I was also pleased to see my legislation to double the revenue counties retain from DMV transactions pass the Senate. While the measure did not make it through the Assembly, I plan to again push for its passage next year.

***Protecting our region's biggest employer—and public safety:*** Fort Drum is the economic engine of our region, and we need to do all we can to protect it. That's why I was pleased to have secured \$1 million in funding to strengthen the installation. \$650,000 in funding will allow fire departments and first responders across Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties that serve Fort Drum and surrounding communities purchase emergency radios and other emergency equipment, and the remainder will benefit organizations that seek to protect the post and strengthen the ties between it and the North Country region.

***Safeguarding our communities from the dangers of drugs:*** We also took steps to create safer communities through new measures that will help to crack down on our state's heroin

epidemic. As a member of the Senate's Heroin and Opioid Task Force, I was pleased to recently see passage of a package of bills aimed at stopping the growth of New York's heroin and opioid crisis, as well as making it easier to help those looking to break free from the deadly grip of these substances.

Our accomplishments this year are many, and we still have a lot more to achieve when it comes to improving our region. As summer continues, I am looking forward to continuing to hear feedback from the people I represent about how we can work together to create stronger communities and more opportunities for all who call Central and Northern New York home.