



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Ritchie, St. Lawrence County Schools Team Up To Fight Lyme Disease

PATTY RITCHIE May 15, 2017



State Senator Patty Ritchie is announcing she is teaming up with school officials in St. Lawrence County to help prevent Lyme disease by sharing information with students and families about the dangers of the tick-borne illness.

For the last decade, Lyme disease—a bacteria-caused condition that attacks the nervous system, heart, skin and joints—has been creeping northward to our area. Since 2005, the infection rate in St. Lawrence County from Lyme, which is spread through the bite of tiny

ticks, has grown 95 times, from virtually zero to more than 100 victims a year. Meanwhile, the statewide rate has increased by about half that amount.

“With warmer weather finally upon us and everyone taking advantage of it, we need to make sure people are taking steps to stay safe from ticks and Lyme disease,” said Senator Ritchie, who serves as a member of the Senate’s Task Force on Lyme And Tick-Borne Diseases. “I’m pleased to partner with schools across St. Lawrence County to connect students and families with vital information that will help safeguard them from Lyme disease.”

“As students prepare for summer vacation, that means more time outside—and an increased risk of coming into contact with ticks,” said Ronald P. Burke, Superintendent of Edwards-Knox Central School District. “We would like to thank Senator Ritchie for recognizing how big of an issue Lyme disease has become in St. Lawrence County, and for providing our students and families with this important information, which will help them to stay safe as they enjoy the outdoors in the months to come.”

Through Senator Ritchie’s efforts, more than 11,000 students and families across St. Lawrence County have been provided with brochures that offer guidance on how to avoid ticks, what to do if bitten by one of the insects, information on the symptoms of Lyme disease and more. A copy of the handout can be viewed on Senator Ritchie’s website, [www.ritchie.nysenate.gov](http://www.ritchie.nysenate.gov).

In addition, the Senate Monday is expected to approve a number of measures cosponsored by Senator Ritchie that aim to stop the spread of Lyme and other tick-borne diseases, as well as improve treatment for those who are affected by them, including:

**Bill S2168:** This measure helps to address the issue of a lack of insurance coverage for those diagnosed with Lyme disease. The bill requires the State Health Care Quality and Cost

Containment Commission to meet annually and submit a report on the impact of providing coverage for Lyme and other tick-borne diseases.

**Bill 2588:** This bill provides homeowners with important information on the best way to safeguard their property from ticks. It directs the Commissioner of Environmental Conservation to develop guidelines for best practices in treating residential properties to reduce exposure to ticks.

**Bill 2621:** This measure helps to ensure medical professionals receive the proper training to treat those who have contracted Lyme or other tick-borne disease. It authorizes the Department of Health to award grants for graduate medical education in Lyme and tick-borne diseases, designate organizations as centers of excellence for Lyme and tick-borne diseases, and designate Lyme and tick-borne-disease resource centers.

In addition to the expected passage of the above bills, the Senate is also expected to adopt a resolution designating May 2017 as “Lyme Disease Awareness Month in the State of New York.” The new state budget also includes a record \$400,000 in funding for Lyme disease-related research, education and prevention.