



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Senator Ritchie Saves The Squirrel

PATTY RITCHIE June 9, 2017

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Local schools can keep using colorful decals with images of friendly squirrels, cats, elephants, frogs and other animals to help young children identify the right school bus to take them home at the end of the school day, after state officials repealed an earlier order that they were illegal and needed to be removed.

“For young children who are just learning to read and recognize numbers, these decals were a friendly and, frankly, clever way to help make sure that they got home safely at the end of the school day,” Senator Ritchie said. “That’s why so many school districts have adopted them for use on their buses.”

But, Senator Ritchie said, school districts across the state were recently sent a letter that ordered the decals be removed, saying they represented “mission creep” and violated a state law that’s meant to keep school buses free of advertising.

Senator Ritchie contacted the state’s Department of Transportation and, within hours, the order was reversed. Senator Ritchie praised Transportation Commissioner Matt Driscoll for his quick response.

“I am glad that the Department of Transportation has withdrawn an arbitrary interpretation that would have made it harder for small children to identify the school bus they need to board to take them home, and I want to thank Commissioner Driscoll for his quick response.”

“Young children have trouble remembering or identifying a sequence of numbers, but they can easily pick out an elephant, a squirrel or a dog decal to help them remember what bus will take them home. I want to thank Senator Ritchie for intervening on our behalf,” said Hermon DeKalb Central School Superintendent Mark White, who first brought the issue to the Senator’s attention.

*Attn Photo Editors: The above photo depicts a decal used in the Hermon-DeKalb Central School District to help students correctly identify the school bus they need to board*