



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Statement From Senator Patty Ritchie

PATTY RITCHIE June 22, 2017



For the past several months, my colleagues and I have been working diligently at the Capitol to build a brighter future for all New Yorkers. With the 2017 Legislative Session now complete, I am proud to report that by working across the aisle, we have achieved many major accomplishments that will help to make our state a better place to live and work.

With the passage of the new state budget in April, we succeeded in approving a spending plan that reflects the values of New Yorkers and improves our state not only for today, but also for future generations. With record funding for our schools, significant investments in

infrastructure, reductions in burdensome costs to allow small businesses to grow and meaningful middle-class tax relief, we were able to keep our state on a better path while at the same time, controlling spending and protecting taxpayers.

As Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I have been working to provide our hardworking farmers with the resources they need to support our state's leading industry. This year—for the third year in a row—we secured record funding for agriculture, totaling \$51 million, which will help to strengthen the future of family farming. Included in this record investment is \$1 million for the “New Farmers Grant Fund,” which will continue to help the next generation of New York farmers succeed. Going along with this effort are measures I sponsored—which are now headed to the Governor's desk—to establish a “Young Farmer Advisory Board” to help address issues impacting beginning farmers (S.4021) and make it easier for new farmers to access viable farmland (S.4900).

Libraries across our region are hubs of learning, culture and so much more. As chair of the Senate Select Committee on Libraries, I was pleased to help deliver \$94 million in funding for libraries and an additional \$24 million for library capital projects. This commitment goes hand-in-hand with more than \$25 billion in school aid—which represents a year-to-year increase in overall school aid of \$1 billion—that will help students succeed.

As high waters continue to cripple homeowners, businesses and communities along Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River, I have worked alongside my colleagues in recent months to provide relief. Earlier this week, the Senate gave final legislative approval to a measure I cosponsored that provides \$90 million in aid to those impacted by flooding. This measure is in addition to another bill I cosponsored—which was signed into law by the Governor—to accelerate the availability of emergency funding for water infrastructure.

While we have accomplished much in the past several months, there is still more that needs to be done to move our state forward and create more opportunities for New Yorkers. I am looking forward to continuing our efforts and working hard to achieve results for the people I represent in Jefferson, Oswego and St. Lawrence Counties.

### ***Highlights of the 2017 Legislative Session***

#### *Creating jobs*

- The most comprehensive workers' comp reform since 2007 to help save businesses and others hundreds of millions of dollars; and
- Creation of ride-sharing services like Uber and Lyft to create jobs and boost tourism.

#### *Building a brighter future for students*

- Record state funding for local schools totaling \$26 billion so students have the resources they need to learn and grow;
- A boost to the maximum TAP award—which raises eligibility from \$80,000 to \$125,000—over the next three years, which will help ensure middle class families can afford college, regardless of where students enroll to attain a higher education; and
- \$94 million in funding for libraries and an additional \$24 million for library capital projects.

#### *Supporting NY's hardworking farmers*

-A record \$51 million for agriculture that will help support dozens of programs farmers depend on, as well as launch new initiatives designed to strengthen the connection between consumers and local foods;

-Final passage of Senator Ritchie's legislation to create a "Young Farmer Advisory Board" that will help address issues impacting beginning farmers (S.4021); and

-Final passage of Senator Ritchie's legislation to make it easier for new farmers to access viable farmland (S.4900).

#### *Making our state a safer—and healthier—place*

-Record state funding of \$214 million to combat heroin and opioid addiction;

-A record \$400,000 in funding for Lyme disease-related research, education and prevention;

-Final passage of Senator Ritchie's legislation (S.750) to ban electronic cigarettes on school grounds; and

-Final passage of Senator Ritchie's legislation (S.2119-A) to improve the safety of our roadways by adding a motorcycle safety and awareness component to the current five-hour pre-licensing class for new drivers.

#### *Key infrastructure investments*

-The largest investment in history for clean water; \$2.5 billion and growing; and

-Increased CHIPS funding of \$65 million for a total of \$503 million this year and \$2.4 billion over 5 years to help improve roads, highways and bridges across the state.

*Providing much-needed tax relief*

-\$3 billion in STAR property tax relief, including \$500 million for another round of rebate checks for seniors and homeowners;

-Protection of a \$4.2 billion middle-class income tax cut authored by Senate Republicans one of the largest tax cuts in New York State history.