



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie: Senate Budget Includes Investments in School Safety, Record Support for Agriculture, a Boost for Fort Drum and More

PATTY RITCHIE March 14, 2018



State Senator Patty Ritchie is announcing the Senate has advanced a 2018-19 budget plan that includes significant tax relief, record funding for education, unprecedented support for agriculture, investments in school safety and additional aid for those impacted by last year's severe flooding along Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River, among other highlights.

"From making key investments in our schools and the safety of our students to focusing on the growth of key industries—like agriculture—the Senate's budget plan will help to create a

brighter future for our state and those who live here, all while keeping spending under control and rejecting proposals to raise taxes,” said Senator Ritchie.

“In the coming weeks I will be working to see that these proposals, which will help improve the quality of life of New Yorkers, are included in the final state budget.”

Other highlights of the Senate’s spending plan include:

Making New York more affordable

- Rejecting \$1 billion in onerous tax-and-fee increases proposed in the Governor’s Executive Budget, including new taxes on internet purchases and new DMV fees;
- Decouples the state and federal tax codes to prevent New Yorkers from taking a \$1.5 billion state tax hit as a result of recent federal tax changes;
- Rejects the Governor’s cap on STAR benefits and extends the property tax rebate program; and
- Makes small businesses eligible for the STAR property tax savings program.

Increasing School Safety

- Establishing a School Resource Officer program in order to provide improved public safety and security on school grounds;
- A proposal by Senator Ritchie to conduct a statewide review of school counselors, school social workers and school psychologists who serve students. It also directs the state Education Commissioner to develop a plan to achieve nationally accepted professional-to-student ratios in every district and region;

- A proposal to allow School Safety Improvement Teams to review procedures for safety and make on-site inspections to determine what can be done to improve safety; and
- Senator Ritchie's proposal to establish a new program that will equip teachers and other school personnel with personal safety alarms to be used in cases of emergency.

Efforts to grow New York agriculture

- More than \$10 million in Executive Budget restorations—and millions more in new funding—for a record investment in agriculture that will protect the future of the industry;
- Doubles the farm wage credit to strengthen the bottom line of New York's hardworking farmers;
- \$5 million to help rebuild aging facilities at fairs across the state; and
- \$5 million to help upgrade outdated and obsolete buildings and equipment—as well as update programs—at America's premier university for agricultural research, Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

Relief for those impacted by historic Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River flooding

- Including docks within the definition of structures eligible for funding via the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence Seaway Flood Relief and Recovery Grant Program;
- Establishing a new Lake Ontario, St. Lawrence River Flood Prevention, Response and Recovery Program and authorizing the state to issue bonds and notes for related infrastructure projects; and

- Proposing shoreline resiliency infrastructure projects and tax credits to help residents and businesses in the region and others implement preventative measures that will mitigate the impact of future flooding.

A focus on growing jobs and boosting local economies

- Reducing the amount small businesses and farms must pay in taxes by raising the corporate tax threshold and lowering the rate, and also raising the personal income tax exemption and threshold for a combined tax savings of \$495 million;
- Ending the under-performing START-UP NY program and redirecting \$44.5 million in advertising funding to support more effective economic development initiatives;
- Creating a special grant fund to help boost businesses impacted by last year's flooding and increase tourism in the Thousand Islands and Lake Ontario regions;
- Senator Ritchie's proposal to increase the acceptable weight limits on ATVs from 1,000 to 1,500 pounds, allowing New Yorkers to register UTVs and generating more state revenue through registrations, as many riders are traveling outside of New York State to register these increasingly popular vehicles;

Supporting Fort Drum, our troops and our veterans

- \$12 million—which was added at the request of Senator Ritchie—for railhead improvements at Fort Drum that would allow troops to deploy more quickly and efficiently;
- \$5 million for the "Military Base Retention Fund," a fund which Senator Ritchie played a key role in developing in 2012. Since that time, the fund has helped to support a number of

projects key to protecting the future of the installation; and

- More than \$3.5 million for the Joseph P. Dwyer Veteran Peer to Peer Services Program; a statewide initiative that assists troops and veterans in the region Senator Ritchie represents who are struggling with PTSD.

Improved educational opportunities

- A \$1 billion—3.8 percent—increase in school aid funding over last year, bringing the total investment in schools to a record level of \$26.1 billion;
- A restoration of the Executive Budget's \$200 million cuts to SUNY capital;
- An increase in base aid funding for community colleges by \$100 per Full-Time-Equivalent (FTE) student to help prevent tuition hikes and help those who are working—and at the same time managing coursework—to stay in school; and
- Restoring \$4 million and adding \$2 million in new funding for public libraries—the first operating aid increase for libraries since 2016. In addition, the spending plan also includes \$50 million to help libraries across the state complete much-needed construction projects.

Protecting New York's Correctional Officers

- Legislation sponsored by Senator Ritchie that would guarantee full retirement benefits for surviving family members of a correctional officer who dies while still serving as a member of the New York State Department of Corrections. The measure was approved by both the Senate and Assembly last year, but ultimately was vetoed by the Governor.

Improving the health of New Yorkers

- A proposal by Senator Ritchie to address a lack of mental health care nurses by providing salary enhancements for those who serve in mental health facilities—a significant, new investment that will help to strengthen mental health services for children and adults;
- \$1.2 million to support efforts to stop the spread of Lyme and tick-borne diseases;
- Increasing the Health Care Facility Transformation Program funding from the Executive Budget's \$425 million to \$500 million in order to boost a new third round of awards and ensure the success of health care facilities across New York State.

Additional information on the Senate's one-house spending plan can be [found here](#).