



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Join Me in Supporting—and Saluting—Military Families

SENATOR PATTY RITCHIE November 19, 2018

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Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

November is National Military Family Appreciation Month, a time dedicated to showing support for our country's more than 2.7 million active duty military family members. That number includes the nearly 15,500 family members of the more than 15,000 troops stationed at Fort Drum.

Here at home, we as a community have done some wonderful things to show our military families we support them. We have employers and colleges that hold career and education

fairs that help our families find work or continue their education here in the North Country. Local businesses, restaurants and entertainment venues often host events and activity days for children, as well as entire families. The Watertown YMCA for example, hosts parent's night out events, where military parents can drop off their children for a few hours, so they can enjoy a night together.

However, always more can be done to help make a military family's stay in our community the best it can be. A recent survey conducted by the Military Families Advisory Network shows 33 percent of military spouses report being underemployed for their educational background. In an effort to ensure more Fort Drum spouses are able to work in the career field they qualified for in another state, I created a bill that became law in March of last year.

The law allows New York State to modify licensing requirements to expedite the process for a military spouse—who has already qualified for a job license out-of-state—to get a New York State license in that same field, when they move here.

I worked closely with the Department of Defense and the United States Army on the law, which has already seen nearly 100 local military spouses apply for, and about 80% of those applicants receive, an expedited license in the field they have already qualified to work in. Its largest impact has been in the nursing field, as more than half of the applications coming from, and approved for, those with out-of-state registered nurse or licensed practical nurse licenses.

As we approach another legislative in session in Albany, I will be working to get more professions on the list of licenses that can be expedited.

Through this law, and a hopeful expansion of it, we are not only helping our brave military spouses continue to be employed in the career fields they have worked so hard to qualify for,

but we are—especially in fields such as health care—successfully serving historically underserved regions without affecting state standards or implementing costs.

During National Military Family Appreciation Month, every month and every day, I hope you will join me in thanking our military members, veterans and their families for all they sacrifice to defend our freedom and keep us all safe. To our troops, veterans and their families, thank you for going above and beyond to protect this great nation.