



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Join Me to "Protect Our Prisons"

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Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

**\*\*\*[CLICK HERE TO SIGN THE PETITION](#)\*\*\***

Recently, in announcing amendments to his Executive Budget proposal, Governor Andrew Cuomo revealed his plan to close up to three New York State prisons by September 1. If the proposal were approved as part of the new state budget, the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision would review operations at facilities statewide and select up to three for closure.

While the potential locations for closure have not been decided, the feeling of an uncertain future for prisons in our region is all too familiar. In 2011, five state prisons in Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties were on the chopping block. However, in the weeks leading up to the decision, people across our region came together and rallied to protect our prisons and the dedicated people who work inside them. Our efforts paid off and Albany was able to see just how much the North Country needed these facilities.

Every day, dedicated correctional officers and prison staff members put their lives on the line to see that our region's five correctional facilities are the safest and most efficient in the state. Now, the time has come again to make sure everyone—and especially the Governor—knows that. To help in that effort, I am joining with Assembly members Blankenbush and Walczyk to encourage people to show their support for local correctional facilities by signing a petition to protect North Country prisons. You can sign the petition—which already has over 5,000 signatures—by [clicking here](#).

It is our job to remind Albany that not only do our prisons play a critical role in the safety of our state, but also that they support thousands of local jobs. In our region, every job counts—we do not have the opportunity to turn down Amazon and the tens of thousands of jobs it and similar companies can create. We believe that if prisons must close, closing downstate prisons would cause much less harm to their communities. Those prisons also happen to sit on much more valuable land. For example, the land on which Sing Sing Prison in Ossining sits, on the East Bank of the Hudson River, was recently valued at almost \$600,000 per acre.

In addition, in prisons across our state, gang activity and drug use are on the rise—as are the number of correctional officers injured during inmate related incidents. Closing prisons only invites more violence with added inmates in smaller spaces.

As the representative of a region whose district includes five correctional facilities, I am encouraging people to [sign this petition](#) and tell Albany that closing North Country prisons just does not make sense. It only takes a few seconds of your time to stand up for our correctional facilities, their employees and our region.