



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie, Fdrlo Team Up to Deliver More Than 9,000 Signatures in Support of Fort Drum to Army Leadership

PATTY RITCHIE August 25, 2014

| ISSUE: **MILITARY AFFAIRS, MILITARY, TROOPS, VETERANS**

Public Still Encouraged to Stand Up for the Post

*****CLICK HERE TO SIGN THE PETITION IN SUPPORT OF FORT DRUM*****

State Senator Patty Ritchie has announced that through a collaborative effort with the Fort Drum Regional Liaison Organization, more than 9,000 signatures and dozens of resolutions from local municipalities and organizations in support of Fort Drum have been delivered to Army leadership.

Earlier this month, Senator Ritchie launched www.StandUpForFortDrum.com, a website where the public could sign a petition to show their support for the post. There, nearly 3,000 signatures were collected and then delivered to FDRLO to support the organization's petition-gathering effort.

“Fort Drum is a vital part of our region, state and nation,” said Senator Ritchie. “The signatures collected are a testament to our area's desire to preserve and encourage further growth of the post, which each and every day has a significant, positive impact on our local economy, our nation's security and our community as a whole.”

“The signatures collected certainly send a message to Army leadership about just how important we feel Fort Drum is, but it's important that the public realizes our fight is not over. In the months to come, it will be critical for the residents of Central and Northern New York to continue to stand up for the post, its soldiers and their families in an effort to protect it from any cuts.”

“Not only has this effort allowed the people of our region show their support for Fort Drum, it also has raised awareness that the impact of major troop losses would be devastating to our region,” said FDRLO Executive Director Carl McLaughlin. “Fort Drum is the backbone of the North Country, and in the months to come we need to continue our efforts to demonstrate just how critical it is that the post remains

intact.”

Signatures were collected in light of a proposal by the Army to assess the impact of reducing troop levels to numbers not seen since the beginning of World War II. Taken across the board, the reductions could mean significant cuts at Fort Drum, the North Country’s leading economic engine, which supports thousands of jobs and pumps roughly \$1.4 billion into the local economy annually.

In the months to come, Senator Ritchie and the FDRLO will continue to collect signatures in support of Fort Drum. Petitions are expected to be delivered in advance of a listening session, which will take place early next year.

In addition to delivering signatures, Senator Ritchie also wrote a letter to Army leadership, expressing the importance of Fort Drum to our nation’s security, the local community and the region’s economy. A copy of the letter can be [viewed here](#).

As the State Senator representing Fort Drum soldiers and their families, Senator Ritchie has been working diligently to raise awareness of the post. For the past three years, she has hosted “10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Day,” an event held at the Capitol to familiarize Albany with the critical role the post plays.

In addition, Senator Ritchie also led an effort to include \$2 million in additional State Budget funding to protect Fort Drum and other military installations from defense cutbacks. Last year, she was able to access that fund to preserve farmland bordering the post, which serves as a “buffer zone” for military training areas, as well as to support health care initiatives in surrounding communities.

In April, she rallied a bipartisan group of 85 State Senators and Assembly Members from across the state, joining them together to support Fort Drum. The group signed on to a letter sent to Governor Cuomo, encouraging him to enlist the support of leaders in Albany, New York City and Washington, D.C. to fight for the post.

Home to 38,000 soldiers and family members, Fort Drum is the largest Army installation north of North Carolina and east of the Mississippi River. In addition, the post also employs nearly 5,000 civilians and supports tens of thousands of jobs off base to bolster the North Country economy. According to a recent economic impact study, it was estimated that Fort Drum pumped more than \$1.4 billion into the local economy last year.

