



LOCAL MANDATE RELIEF WORKING GROUP

Senator Patty Ritchie
48th Senate District
Oswego • Jefferson • St. Lawrence Counties

March 7, 2012



THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK

SENATOR PATTY RITCHIE
48TH DISTRICT
OSWEGO, JEFFERSON, ST. LAWRENCE COUNTIES

CHAIR
SENATE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

COMMITTEES
COMMERCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
& SMALL BUSINESS
CRIME VICTIMS, CRIME & CORRECTION
CULTURAL AFFAIRS, TOURISM, PARKS &
RECREATION
ENERGY & TELECOMMUNICATIONS
HIGHER EDUCATION
HOUSING, CONSTRUCTION &
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

MEMBER
LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON
RURAL RESOURCES

March 7, 2012

Dear Friend:

With the creation of the new Legislative-Executive Commission on Mandate Relief, we continue to make significant progress toward easing the burden of unfunded mandates from taxpayers and local governments, making government more efficient and providing better value for our hard-earned tax dollars.

The Commission is traveling the state, gathering input and recommendations from taxpayer and local leaders about the best ways to trim the cost of government, while preserving vital services.

In this second report by my own Mandate Relief Working Group, local officials from Oswego, Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties offer some ideas for reforms that will produce real savings for taxpayers, and bring some common sense to government administration.

The Working Group's recommendations include seven steps to reduce costs for public schools. Like its predecessor, I am forwarding the report to both the Mandate Relief Commission and the new Senate Task Force on Government Efficiency.

They are only part of a wider effort to provide mandate relief to schools and local government that's already found success, including a recently enacted cap on Medicaid costs, and the elimination last year of dozens of individual mandates, saving over \$100 million annually for taxpayers.

Working together, we can make a difference and bring real relief to local taxpayers. Once again, I want to thank the members of my Mandate Relief Working Group for their tireless efforts. Transforming state government means listening to the opinions and ideas of local leaders like them, and I am proud to be able to join them in this important effort.

Sincerely,

Patty Ritchie

REPLY TO: ALBANY OFFICE: ROOM 815 LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247 (518) 455-3438
 JEFFERSON COUNTY OFFICE: 317 WASHINGTON STREET, ROOM 418, WATERTOWN, NEW YORK 13601 (315) 782-3418
 OSWEGO COUNTY OFFICE: 46 EAST BRIDGE STREET, FIRST FLOOR, OSWEGO, NEW YORK 13126 (315) 342-2057
 ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY OFFICE: 330 FORD STREET, OGDENSBURG, NEW YORK 13669 (315) 393-3024

E-MAIL: RITCHIE@NYSENATE.GOV
WEBSITE: WWW.RITCHIE.NYSENATE.GOV



RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MANDATE RELIEF WORKING GROUP

REGULATIONS AND STATUTES FOR REVIEW

Eliminate Duplicative Annual School Audit (Educ. Law, various sections)

Audit requirements designed to stop fraud and abuse are often duplicative, and needlessly consume time and resources that could be better spent on educational programs. Cost of compliance: \$5,000 to \$10,000 annually per district.

School Calendar Flexibility (Education Law §3604(8))

Currently, districts cannot be reimbursed if they choose to schedule calendar days in during July or August. SED supported this reform last year.

Budget Notice Requirements (Education Law §2022)

Six day notice budget notices are required to include redundant information that is not always clear to voters/taxpayers, and duplicates other mandated notices. Review budget notice requirements to find economies, and identify better ways to communicate this information with residents.

Fingerprinting

Persons who have been fingerprinted and cleared by other government agencies must redo the entire process again through the State Education Department. This results in duplication and additional costs for districts.

Electronic Voting Mandate (Ch. 3, L.2011)

School districts are still struggling under tight budgets, yet will be required to absorb additional expense next year to comply with requirements for electronic voting devices. Should consider eliminating this requirement, or granting an additional extension for compliance in view of the state's and districts' difficult fiscal situation. Cost to individual districts: Additional \$12,000 to \$14,000 per year.

School bus driver qualifications (8 NYCRR 156.3)

Federal and NY State law require physical examinations for school bus drivers to help ensure passenger safety, but the requirements are not consistent. As a result, drivers are often required to perform two separate physical exams in order to be in compliance. This adds additional cost to districts (or to individuals who may be unemployed at the time of their exams) and makes it more difficult to attract qualified candidates.

Clarify that Substitute Teachers are not eligible for Unemployment (Labor Law Sec. 590)

Substitutes are "at will" employees with no expectation of fulltime status and can apply for benefits for even vacation periods. This costs districts hundreds of hours of work for business offices defending claims that ultimately are denied.

PRIOR RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MANDATE RELIEF WORKING GROUP

SUPPORT PROPOSED LEGISLATION

S. 5509-A—E-911 surcharge distribution
S.5909—Prompt payment of state debts
S.5498—Parole reform
S.2707—Ban unfunded mandates

REGULATIONS AND STATUTES FOR REVIEW

- 1. Board of Elections**—Authorize expanded election districts.
- 2. Fire & EMS**—Revise “Rope” rule.
- 3. Office of the Aging**—Consolidate services of county dieticians
- 4. Department of Health**—Review overly burdensome program regulations
- 5. Courts**—Expand use of electronic recording
- 6. Public Authorities**—Reform audit requirements
- 7. Environment**—Streamline environmental review
- 8. Local highways**—Preserve local highway funding
- 9. Low-volume roads legislation**—Allow for designation of “low-volume roads”
- 10. Shared court services**—Simplify procedure for intermunicipal agreement
- 11. Dog control**—Simplify bookkeeping requirements
- 12. Water system reports**—Eliminate costly duplicate reports
- 13. Benefit assessment notices**—Simplify public hearing requirements
- 14. Certificate paper**—Provide sufficient materials to carry out state program
- 15. Background checks**—Eliminate requirement for certified responses
- 16. Court appearances**—Expand use of electronic appearances
- 17. State payments offset**—Allow counties to offset state liabilities and receivables

Senator Patty Ritchie
48th Senate District
Mandate Relief Working Group

Members

Hon. Justin Taylor, co-chair
Supervisor, Town of Clayton

Hon. Kevin Acres, co-chair
St. Lawrence County Legislator

Peter FitzRandolph
Former Finance chair
St. Lawrence Co. Board of Legislators

Hon. Scott Gray
Jefferson County Legislator

William Lynch
Superintendent, Fulton City Schools

Jamie Moesel
Superintendent, South Jefferson CSD

Hon. Vicki Mullen
Oswego Town Supervisor

Hon. Peggy Manchester
Mayor, Village of Lacona

Jack Zeh
Heuvelton School Board President