



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Betty Little

Little, Sayward: Bridge Closure Warrants State of Emergency

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October 20, 2009

ISSUE:

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Legislators formally request governor to make declaration

Senator Betty Little and Assemblywoman Teresa Sayward have written letters to Governor David Paterson requesting that a state of emergency be declared in response to last Friday's closure of the Lake Champlain Bridge.

The letters, delivered today to Paterson's Executive Chamber in Albany, outline the personal and professional hardship being experienced by families, businesses, farmers and others that rely on the bridge to travel between New York and Vermont.

"The immediate and worsening impact that this sudden closure of a vital link between New York and Vermont has had on the North Country cannot be overstated," Little wrote.

“One hundred mile detours twice a day are not feasible,” said Sayward. “ Ferry commutation costs in a region continually suffering economic hardship are also not feasible.”

Little and Sayward want emergency funds appropriated quickly to help mitigate the economic impact of the bridge closure, especially for those who have incurred higher costs for commuting to work, or who have lost their jobs because their employers have suffered an immediate financial loss.

“I have been meeting and speaking with all involved in finding a solution as quickly as possible. In those meetings, most agree that declaring a state of emergency is a response that would facilitate a more comprehensive approach and make available a greater array of resources.

Little added: “Those we represent are in no way responsible for the failure of this bridge. However, they are impacted personally and professionally every day nothing is done to substantially alleviate their sudden hardship.”

The legislators said and federal officials need to work in concert to marshal whatever resources are available to alleviate the immediate economic toll while reaching a quick decision to either fix the bridge or build a new one to accommodate a large volume of traffic.

“We can spend hours in meetings and on conference calls sorting out the various priorities and possible short-term fixes to what has been recognized for a generation as a major catastrophe in the making for our region” said Sayward. “Recriminations can come later. Right now we need the Governor to declare a State of Emergency in order to facilitate immediate relief for the North Country.”