



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie: Senate Restores Funding to Critical Agriculture Programs

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As Legislature Celebrates 100th Anniversary Of Farm Bureau's Birth In Upstate New York

Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Patty Ritchie announced that the Senate will vote today to restore funding to New York's critical agriculture programs as the legislature celebrated the 100th anniversary of New York Farm Bureau, the state's leading advocate for the agriculture industry.

The Senate's budget will serve as the basis for negotiations between the two houses of the legislature in crafting a final budget proposal

"As the chair of the Senate's Agriculture Committee, my top priority has been to insure that our farms and agribusinesses do not suffer a disproportionate share of

the budget cuts as we wrestle with the state's fiscal crisis," Senator Ritchie said. "The Senate's budget that I was proud to support today sends a message that our 36,000 family farms are a key part of our effort to revitalize our State's economy."

"While some people have been telling our farm families to give up hope, while dreaming up new ways to tax them, and pit our agricultural sectors against each other, I have been listening to their common sense advice on how we can harness our agribusiness community to help our upstate economy recover from this recession," she said.

"Our Senate budget fulfills my promise to cut spending, totalling \$100 million less than the governor proposed and \$700 million below what the Assembly wants to spend," Senator Ritchie said. "It also fulfills my promise to not raise taxes, despite the Assembly's efforts to raise billions of dollars in new job killing taxes whose only result would be to drive more businesses out of our communities."

"If we truly want to change our state's status as the worst place in the nation to run a business, we need to understand we can't attract companies to come to our communities if we keep chasing their owners to states that offer a more business friendly environment," Senator Ritchie said.

The Senate's budget reallocates \$263 million in State school aid to reduce the regional disparities in the Governor's budget which disproportionately cut upstate and rural school districts.

The Senate budget rejects the proposal to create competitive grants that would have pitted agricultural sectors against each other for a limited program funding.

"The Senate budget restores vital agricultural funding while allowing me to keep my promise to cut state spending without raising taxes," she said.

"A century ago, New York's farm families banded together to create what has become a national movement with Farm Bureau," Senator Ritchie said. "Over the past 100 years, they have showed what our rural communities can accomplish when we work together to make a better life for ourselves and our families. Our Senate budget helps give the 30,000 member families of Farm Bureau the tools and vital programs they need to help us revitalize our State's economy."

In addition to acting on the state budget, the senate was expected to approve a resolution sponsored by Senator Ritchie to honor New York Farm Bureau on its 100th anniversary.

Senator Ritchie's resolution states in part: Whereas, the New York Farm Bureau's visionary Board of Directors developed numerous initiatives that enable farmers to effectively produce and sell their products, provide nutritious and affordable locally grown foods to consumers, serve as a vital contributor to our State's economy and serve as environmental stewards that protect and enhance our State's natural resources;

It includes:

- \$1 million for the Farm Viability Institute
- \$822,000 for the Pro Dairy Program
- \$300,000 for North Country Agricultural Development Program
- \$192,000 for Future Farmers of America
- \$150,000 for the Cornell Rabies Program that also serves Northern New York
- \$206,000 for Apple Growers Association
- \$713,000 for the Wine and Grape Foundation
- \$80,000 for Agriculture in the Classroom
- \$66,000 for the Association of Agricultural Educators
- \$100,000 for Tractor Rollover Prevention