



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Legislature Passes Historic Early Budget

PATTY RITCHIE April 1, 2011

State Senator Patty Ritchie hailed last night's early passage of a state budget that trims the size of government, makes major restorations in schools hardest hit by funding cuts, rejected job-killing tax increases, protects farmers and helps set New York on a path to economic recovery.

The new budget closed a \$10 billion gap without new taxes, yet still restored \$4.3 million to school districts in the Senator's district. Many of those schools were hard hit by a school aid funding formula that meant disproportionate cuts to rural and Upstate schools. It was one of the largest restorations for any Senate District in the state and, unlike some other parts of the state, resulted in additional state funding for every school district.

Schools in Oswego County received a total of \$1.85 million in additional aid; Jefferson County schools gained \$1.7 million, and 10 St. Lawrence County school districts included in the 48th Senate District will receive \$682,000.

"A lot of people have difficulty understanding the school aid formula, but it was easy to understand that schools in rural parts of the state were disproportionately impacted by the Governor's original proposal," Senator Ritchie said. "We went to work, and crafted an aid formula that, while still including tough cuts for our schools, made more sense, and helped ease the pain."

"This budget included tough choices, but it is far more realistic, balanced and fair than any of the alternatives, and it

will help get our state back on track to recover from this bruising recession, and start creating jobs again,” Senator Ritchie said.

“But our work isn’t done. I intend to continue to make sure the Governor recognizes the outstanding people employed at our five prisons. I am confident that the governor will find they represent the best deal for the taxpayers of New York State.”

In addition to the school funding restorations, the new budget:

- * Reduced overall state spending by 2 percent. It’s the first real year-to-year spending cut in 15 years;
- * Included none of the new taxes, borrowing or gimmicks sought by advocates for higher spending, and kept Albany’s commitment to phase out prior year increases in income and sales taxes;
- * Provides full funding for key agriculture programs that were eliminated in the Governor’s original budget. The programs help farmers become more profitable and help sustain farming as a viable industry in New York State;
- * Restored funds for libraries in Northern and Central New York;
- * Creates a new low-cost power program—ReCharge NY—that’s more generous than earlier programs, and covers a broader range of businesses, including farms, to help attract new industry and create jobs;
- * Reins in runaway spending on Medicaid and other entitlements, while protecting funds for the EPIC prescription drug program for seniors.

"This budget shows that New York State is committed to bringing fiscal sanity to our finances. It proves that the Empire State wants businesses and families to make their home in our communities,” Senator Ritchie said.