



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Senator Ritchie: Bills Limit Military Funeral Protests

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Prevents Disruption While Families Mourn Fallen Heroes

State Senator Patty Ritchie said a measure she cosponsored that received final legislative approval will help prevent protesters from disrupting military funerals, burials and memorial services.

“When our military families gather to mourn and bid farewell to our fallen heroes, New York State owes it to them to protect them from those who would insult their sacrifice by exploiting these solemn occasions to stage protests and publicity stunts,” Senator Ritchie said. “By using the same kind of regulations that currently allow us to protect parades and demonstrations, we can insure that constitutional free speech rights are protected while grieving families are allowed to pay their final goodbyes to loved ones who have made the ultimate sacrifice.”

The U.S. Supreme Court recently decided that individuals have the right to protest at funerals of military families, but states can balance constitutional free speech rights by imposing reasonable regulations to protect mourning families and friends during the service.

Senator Ritchie cosponsored (S.3901A) with Senator Lee Zeldin (R-C-I, Shirley) that will allow a permit process regulating demonstrations at veteran and veteran family member funerals, and authorizes the imposition of fines for failure to comply with the permit provisions.

Senator Ritchie voted for Senator Joseph Griffo's (R-C, Rome) companion bill which triples the buffer zone distance for protests from 100 to 300 feet.

Both bills were passed by the Senate on March 14, 2011. The bills were amended and passed the Assembly on June 6, 2011.

The bills will be sent to the Governor.