



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie: County Taxpayers Spared From New Year's 'Mandate'

PATTY RITCHIE October 26, 2011

'Extra' Medicaid Bill Would Have Cost NNY/CNY \$1.35 Million

State Senator Patty Ritchie today cheered a decision to reschedule the due date for a "extra" mandated Medicaid payment from counties, a move that will spare Oswego, Jefferson, and St. Lawrence County homeowners and taxpayers an unexpected \$1.35 million mandate next year.

Senator Ritchie said that the three counties she represents each were on the hook for the extra payment because state bureaucrats had moved a payment deadline one day earlier, to Dec. 31 to avoid the Jan. 1, 2013 New Year's holiday. That pushed the payment into the counties' 2012 budget year for counties and threatened to throw local government budgets out of balance.

When she learned of the state's payment shift through news reports and from members of her Mandate Relief Working Group- a volunteer panel of local officials who are working with the Senator to find ways to lower the cost of government- Senator Ritchie joined several of her Senate colleagues in reaching out to state officials, urging them to reverse the decision and provide relief for taxpayers.

"At a time when we are all working to cut costs and straining to put their budgets together, a simple calendar glitch would have wreaked havoc as county governments begin to assemble to their budgets for the upcoming fiscal year, and cost Central and Northern New York taxpayers over \$1.35 million," said Senator Ritchie.

"I am grateful to state officials who worked with us, and allowed common sense to prevail over bureaucracy, to the benefit of taxpayers and local governments."

The extra payment in 2012 would have cost Oswego County an additional \$481,084; Jefferson County \$386,215; and St. Lawrence County \$461,076. With the change, the counties can plan their 2012 budget year without having to come up with the extra payment, with no additional cost to the state.

Senator Ritchie said the experience has reinforced her commitment to tackling the problem of out-of-control mandates that are driving up the cost of government, while producing little benefit.

"Not a single citizen would benefit from this requirement that would have cost taxpayers across the state millions of extra dollars in 2012," said Senator Ritchie. "I am convinced that there are many other

examples of bureaucratic rules and red tape that result in more waste, duplication and excess, and that we can bring relief by repealing mandates that are unnecessary, or have outlived their usefulness.”

This year, Senator Ritchie voted to eliminate \$127 million in outdated mandates—and blocked over a dozen new mandates that would have cost taxpayers more.

To find even more savings, Senator Ritchie named a panel of nine leaders in local government to her Mandate Relief Working Group to find other unnecessary requirements, and make recommendations to a statewide panel for repeal.

In addition, she’s sponsored legislation (S.5909) to help ease counties’ cash crunch by requiring the state to pay interest on debts that it owes counties, even as it insists that local governments stay current on their obligations.