



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Mandate Panel Offers First Batch of Tax-Saving Ideas

PATTY RITCHIE December 13, 2011

| ISSUE: **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Senator, Local Leaders Join Forces to Cut Taxpayer Costs

A panel created by State Senator Patty Ritchie to identify outdated and unnecessary state mandates has come up with its first targets, listing 17 specific items that should be reviewed, revised, scaled back or repealed to help save taxpayer dollars.

Senator Ritchie's bipartisan Mandate Relief Working Group comprises leaders from county and local governments, and school districts from across Oswego, Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties. The group was tasked with gathering ideas from local communities and their own experiences on ways to cut overregulation and save money.

"For years, Albany enacted costly mandates and created an increasingly heavy burden on counties, schools and local governments—and, most importantly, local taxpayers," Senator Ritchie said. "But with governments at every level facing tough times—and taxpayers tightening their belts as well—we need to find ways to deliver government services more efficiently and cut costs.

"That's why I created my Mandate Relief Working Group. From dog licenses to highway maintenance, the ideas they've generated can help reduce costs for local governments, and make government operate more efficiently, so that the savings can be passed along to local taxpayers."

State leaders like Senator Ritchie are already working to cut costs to local taxpayers by, among other things, reining in Medicaid and other costs to local governments. This year, the Governor and Legislature worked together to also eliminate \$127 million in mandates, rejected proposals for new regulations, and created a new Legislative-Executive Mandate Relief Commission, with sweeping powers to revise or repeal outdated and excessive regulations.

Senator Ritchie will forward her Working Group's recommendations to that statewide panel. She is also sending the report to a Senate Task Force on Government Efficiency, on which she serves.

Among the Working Group's recommendations:

Election districts: The panel recommends increasing the maximum size of election districts to cut down on administrative costs;

Dog licenses: The panel recommends a change in the way that towns remit payment to the state for dog licenses, to be later reimbursed;

Local roads: The panel wants to preserve state funding for certain rural roads, and create a new, less costly maintenance standard for local roads that are rarely used;

"Ropes" rule: The panel called for modifying a requirement for costly safety harnesses that are rarely used by rural fire companies;

Duplicate reports: The panel cited an example of duplicate reporting by towns and villages that is costly and time-consuming;

Excessive regulation: The panel wants a review of overly strict state rules governing the type of forks and plates that are to be used in county-run meal programs;

Electronic appearances: The panel recommends expanding the use of video for court appearances to cut down on transportation expenses;

Public audits: The panel wants to modify the requirements for outside audits of smaller agencies, to lower costs of compliance;

In addition to its specific recommendations for savings, the Working Group also gave its support to several bills already introduced, including some measures sponsored by Senator Ritchie, including bills to require prompt payment to counties of state debts, and to relieve crowding in local jails by requiring the state to remove its prisoners from local lock-ups faster..

A complete copy of the report is attached below, and also [available by clicking here](#).

Senator Ritchie said she has asked her Mandate Relief Working Group to continue to meet to identify other ways for local governments to save.

“I want to publicly thank the members of my Working Group who volunteered to serve, and spent many hours soliciting ideas and preparing these recommendations,” senator Ritchie said.

Members of Senator Ritchie’s Mandate Relief Working Group include: Co-chairs **Justin Taylor**, the Town of Clayton Supervisor, and St. Lawrence County Legislator **Kevin Acres**; **Peter FitzRandolph**, former chair of the St. Lawrence County Board of Legislators Finance Committee, and **Scott Gray**, Finance chair of the Jefferson County Legislature; Fulton City Schools Superintendent **William Lynch**, and **Jamie Moesel**, Superintendent of South Jefferson Central Schools; Oswego Town Supervisor **Vicki Mullen** and Mayor **Peggy Manchester**, of the Village of Lacona; and **Jack Zeh**, President of the Heuvelton School Board.