



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Ritchie: Use State Contracts to Help Returning Vets Find Work

PATTY RITCHIE January 24, 2012

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### **Asks Governor to Expand Law to Aid Jobless Veterans**

State Senator Patty Ritchie is asking Governor Andrew Cuomo to consider expanding a program that helps minority- and women-owned businesses gain state and local government contracts to create new jobs for veterans, including those returning from deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan who are struggling to find work.

The Governor is looking to double the size of the state's MWBE program, which requires local and state governments to look for minority-owned and women-owned businesses to fill orders for goods and public services.

But Senator Ritchie said local governments in Central and Northern New York are already having trouble filling existing requirements, but the solution may lie in expanding the types of eligible firms to include those owned by veterans.

“While the national jobless rate for civilians aged 18-24 has been dropping recently, the rate for returning Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans has been climbing,” Senator Ritchie said. “According to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, nearly one in three veterans of these conflicts cannot find work. This problem threatens to get worse with the return of tens of thousands of currently deployed troops. It poses a particular dilemma for my district, which is home to Fort Drum and the Army’s 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, the most deployed combat force in our Armed Forces today.”

“I am urging you to consider expanding the definition of MWBE firms to also include those owned principally by veterans. This would fill a dual need, allowing us to achieve the ambitious goals you have set for expanding MWBE contracting opportunities, and helping our returning troops find solid employment in the communities that have welcomed them, and need them to stay here,” Senator Ritchie said.

“The men and women who serve our nation and state deserve every effort we can give to help them as they seek to be active and productive members of our communities. I believe the MWBE program could be an especially productive way to bring these heroes the support they need, and show our appreciation as well.”

Senator Ritchie serves on a special commission created by the Governor that is studying ways to expand business and contracting opportunities for local small businesses owned by women and minorities.

A copy of her letter can be found below.