



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Hails Passage of Key Reforms

PATTY RITCHIE March 15, 2012

| ISSUE: **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CRIME, ELECTIONS, GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS**

State Senator Patty Ritchie is hailing passage of a series of reforms last night that protect the public from violent, repeat criminals and boost public safety; provide billions of dollars of savings to local taxpayers, and overhaul New York's once-a-decade process for redrawing legislative districts.

Both houses of the Legislature also took the first step to allowing a public referendum to legalize casino gambling.

"Working together in a bipartisan fashion with Governor Cuomo and the Assembly, we are changing the way that New York government works and getting the job done," said Senator Ritchie.

Among the reforms enacted:

- expansion of the state's DNA database, a crime-fighting tool familiar to fans of popular TV dramas like CSI, to include samples from nearly every criminal, which police can compare with evidence from unsolved crimes. The bill includes some exceptions for certain low-level misdemeanors;
- pension reforms that save local taxpayers \$80 billion over the next 30 years, providing relief to local governments from one of their fastest growing mandated costs;
- first passage of a Constitutional Amendment that sets in motion a 2013 public referendum on whether to allow casino gambling in the state. At least 20 states already allow non-Indian casinos, and New York is home to five Native American casinos, nine "racinos" and more electronic gaming machines than Atlantic City;
- landmark redistricting reform that would create an independent commission to redraw legislative and congressional district lines based on population changes.

The casino and redistricting measures will require passage again next year before they can be put to a public vote.