



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## State Budget Includes Mandate Relief for Taxpayers

PATTY RITCHIE March 30, 2012

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### **Medicaid Reform Will Save Millions for Local Counties**

State Senator Patty Ritchie today announced that the new state budget, adopted two days before the deadline, includes broad mandate relief for local governments, saving taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars.

The budget includes a state freeze on local payments for Medicaid, requiring the state to take over any increased costs of the program over five years. That will save taxpayers in St. Lawrence, Oswego and Jefferson Counties \$10.8 million. Statewide, the takeover saves taxpayers \$1.17 billion.

“For years, runaway Medicaid costs have squeezed county budgets and increased pressure to raise taxes,” Senator Ritchie said. “But over the past two years, we have started to rein in the Medicaid mandate, and with this step, begin to offer real relief for local taxpayers.”

“I am pleased to be able to offer this relief to counties and local taxpayers to help lower the cost of government, and hold the line on local taxes.”

Relief from rising Medicaid costs, along with recently enacted public employee pension reforms, were two top priorities of county leaders across the state.

In addition to the Medicaid freeze, the budget also:

- makes permanent changes to CHIPs, the main program of state aid for local government highway maintenance, to require state reimbursement for the use of oil and stone paving materials. These materials are often favored by rural communities and for use on less-traveled roads. The provision was one of more than two dozen recommendations made by Senator Ritchie’s Mandate Relief Working Group;
- added \$22.1 million in state aid to community colleges, helping to hold down county costs;
- requires the state to pick up all local costs resulting from the expansion of the crime-solving DNA database.

Mandate relief for local taxpayers is a top priority for Senator Ritchie. Last year, she voted to repeal a series of outdated mandates, saving more than \$100 million for local taxpayers, and has been collaborating with local officials through a Mandate Relief Working Group she created to identify more ways to save tax dollars. To date, the group has made more than two dozen mandate relief recommendations.