



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Bill to Simplify Senior 'Star' Renewals Passed by Senate

PATTY RITCHIE April 17, 2012

| ISSUE: **SENIOR CENTERS, STAR (SCHOOL TAX RELIEF PROGRAM)**

Builds on Efforts to Deliver Property Tax Relief

The state Senate today passed a bill cosponsored by Senator Patty Ritchie that would make it easier for senior citizens to renew their Enhanced STAR property tax savings each year.

The measure (S.1920) would allow most seniors to use a simplified renewal form, rather than the current, longer form that is used by all STAR applicants, including those under 65 who qualify for the Basic STAR program.

"When just about everything is becoming more expensive, the property tax savings provided by STAR make a real difference to many seniors who are struggling to get by on fixed incomes," said Senator Ritchie. "We shouldn't make them jump through hoops each year to get the property tax savings they need and deserve."

"This bill would save time and confusion, help seniors protect their privacy and personal information, and ensure that more senior homeowners can have access to this critically important tax-savings program."

The new form would be available to senior citizens whose income or living situations have not changed since the prior year, and who don't participate in the automatic Income Verification Program that is already offered under STAR.

Enhanced STAR is available to those 65 or better who own their primary residence, and meet certain income eligibility requirements. Enhanced STAR doubles the value of the Basic STAR exemption, providing hundreds of dollars in additional tax savings.

The bill, which now goes to the Assembly, continues Senator Ritchie's fight to help lower property taxes and strengthen the STAR property tax relief program.

Over two years, Senator Ritchie has directly helped hundreds of senior homeowners in Oswego, Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties qualify for the higher Enhanced STAR benefit.

She's also been working to restore STAR rebates for homeowners that were cancelled in 2009. Senator Ritchie sponsors two bills to restore the rebate checks, and played a key role in including restoration of rebates in this year's Senate budget proposal. The Assembly Majority rejected that plan, however.

Restoration of STAR rebates would save a typical Central and Northern New York homeowner more than \$400 a year on their property taxes.

Senator Ritchie also has been working to cut mandates on local governments that contribute to higher property taxes and supported Gov. Cuomo's "tax cap" that limits increases in annual tax bills.