



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Bill Would Stop Fleeing Felons From Collecting Public Assistance

PATTY RITCHIE June 21, 2012

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Would Require Checks on Felon Status, Parole Violation of Those Applying for Public Assistance

Senator Patty Ritchie today announced Senate approval of her bill that would prevent wanted fugitives from being able to collect public assistance.

The measure, which is co-sponsored by Senator David J. Valesky, and sponsored by Assemblyman Will Barclay in the Assembly; was sparked by an arrest in Oswego County, where authorities discovered Edward Moses, a South Carolina man who was wanted for attempted murder, kidnapping and possession of a weapon, was fleeing the law and receiving New York State benefits.

This legislation comes on the heels of another measure taken in the fight against welfare fraud and abuse. On Tuesday, a bill Senator Ritchie sponsored to stop the use of taxpayer-paid EBT welfare cards to buy lottery tickets, beer and cigarettes passed in the Senate.

"These benefits are not intended for people who are evading arrest or are wanted criminals," said Senator Ritchie.

"This legislation will help protect the integrity of our state's public assistance programs by making sure benefits are going to those who are truly in need of assistance—not people who are trying to scam the system."

"Public assistance benefits are meant for law-abiding individuals who are truly in need, not for those who flee from charges," said Senator David J. Valesky. "This legislation will protect those in need and also provide another tool for law enforcement to get dangerous criminals off the streets."

The measure, S.6156, would amend the executive law and the social services law to require the Division of Criminal Justice Services to check the wanted felon status and probation or parole violator status of people applying for public assistance.

Currently, both federal and state law prohibits people who know they are fleeing felons and those who are knowingly violating probation or parole from receiving public assistance. However, at this time, there is no law in place to ensure that applicants are investigated to ensure they aren't violating the law.

This legislation would authorize the Division of Criminal Justice Services to provide this information to commissioners of the social services departments, and require those departments inquire about the status of those applying for benefits.

In the past, the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance worked with the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, to check if an applicant was a fleeing felon.

However, a ruling in *Fowlkes v. Adamec*, determined a law was needed to give local Department of Social Services offices the authority to look into whether an applicant was a fleeing felon.

The bill was sent to the Assembly.