



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Senate Passes Bill to Let 'Gold Star' Moms Keep Plates

PATTY RITCHIE June 21, 2012

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Measure Sparked by Case of CNY Woman Forced to Surrender Commemorative License that Honored Fallen Son

A bill prompted by the case of a Central New York octogenarian who was forced by the DMV to surrender the distinctive license plates minted in honor of her hero, who was killed in combat in Vietnam, was passed by the Senate last night.

The measure, S.5693, cosponsored by CNY Senators Patty Ritchie, Joseph Griffo and David Valesky, would permit "Gold Star Mothers" to keep one of their pair of commemorative plates as a memento, instead of having to turn both in to the DMV when they cancel their vehicle's registration.

The bill was prompted by the 2011 case of Ethel Barnes, an 86-year-old Gold Star Mother from Cato, who was forced to surrender the plates that honored her #46 license plate that she kept to honor her only son, Robert, killed in a Vietnam jungle in 1967. Mrs. Barnes was told she couldn't keep the plate when she decided she could no longer drive.

"The sons and daughters of Gold Star Mothers are American heroes who have made the ultimate sacrifice to their country," said Senator Ritchie. "And these mothers, having endured so much heartache and

suffering, are heroes, too. Letting Gold Star Mothers keep their commemorative license plates is just one very small way we can say ‘thanks’ and pay tribute to these fallen soldiers and their families.” After hearing of Mrs. Barnes dilemma last year, Senator Ritchie sprang into action, and won the return of the plate from the DMV. The plate is now proudly displayed alongside her son’s Army service awards. “The measure passed by the Senate aims to ensure no other Gold Star Mother has to endure the pain that Mrs. Barnes went through in fighting stubborn bureaucracy to honor her son, a true American hero.” The bill was sent to the Assembly.