



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Standing Up for Our Seniors

PATTY RITCHIE October 22, 2012

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### Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

From sitting down with seniors for coffee at Meadowview Apartments in Central Square, to talking with veterans at an annual ham dinner in Dexter, I've been spending a lot of time listening to the concerns of the older residents living in our region.

One of the biggest opportunities for chatting up seniors was at my Senior Health and Wellness Fairs, held recently in Central and Northern New York. The events, which attracted more than 2,000 seniors, were held in Jefferson, Oswego and for the very first time ever, in St. Lawrence County.

In our conversations, one of the topics that came up most often was how to stay healthy and active as you age. Luckily, here in New York State there's a program designed especially for seniors to help them afford the prescription drugs they need.

The Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage program, or EPIC, helps more than 280,000 income-eligible seniors (including more than 10,000 in our region) supplement their out-of-pocket Medicare Part D drug plan costs.

Recently, changes to the EPIC program caused medication costs to skyrocket for many seniors. Due to budget cuts, program participants had to hit a nearly \$3,000 spending threshold before EPIC would cover out-of-pocket expenses for seniors with Medicare Part D prescription drug plans.

I know how vital EPIC is to the elderly population of New York State, that's why I fought to restore funds to the program in the past two State Budgets. Thankfully, starting on January 1<sup>st</sup> of next year, EPIC will once again cover co-pays for prescription medications.

The changes to the program have left a lot of seniors with questions, which is why I invited Senator David Valesky, Chair of the Senate's Aging Committee, to my Oswego County Senior Health and Wellness Fair, to address the concerns of seniors in a special Q&A session on the topic. If you missed the event, click [here](#) to view a video recap of the fair, which includes information on EPIC.

If you're looking for additional details or want to apply for the program, click [here](#). You can also call the EPIC toll-free Helpline at 1-800-332-3742.

For seniors, the best years are yet to come. As your State Senator, I'm committed to doing all I can to make sure our elderly population gets the tools they need to ensure their golden years are not only happy, but healthy too.