



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie: No Taxpayer Dollars for Smokes, Booze, Lotto

PATTY RITCHIE June 19, 2013

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Senate Passes Ritchie Cosponsored Measure to Stop Welfare Recipients From Using EBT Cards on Alcohol, Lotto Tickets, Casino Gambling

State Senator Patty Ritchie has announced a measure she cosponsored to prohibit welfare recipients from using their Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) Cards on items such as cigarettes, alcoholic beverages and lottery tickets or casino gambling, has passed the State Senate.

“EBT cards are intended to help people who have fallen on hard times afford the necessities. But, when these cards are used to purchase things like smokes, booze or lottery tickets, it’s a major waste of taxpayer money” said Senator Ritchie.

“This measure would help stop welfare fraud and ensure these benefits are being used the way they are intended.”

“The Public Assistance Integrity Act,” would prevent welfare recipients from using their EBT cards to make ATM withdrawals from certain places, including liquor stores, casinos and strip clubs.

Under the measure (S.966), individuals would be disqualified from receiving public assistance benefits by means of direct cash payment or EBT for one month for the first offense, three months for a second offense and would lose privileges permanently for a third offense.

Currently, no law exists protecting public assistance cash benefits from being either used to purchase alcohol, tobacco or lottery tickets, or withdrawn or used in any liquor store, casino or establishment providing adult-oriented entertainment.

The legislation was prompted by media reports by the New York Post, NBC News and others that showed EBT cards were regularly being used in locations such as bars, liquor stores, tobacco shops and even strip clubs. Last month, Florida became the first state to enact such a ban.

The measure was sent to the Assembly, where it is sponsored by Assemblyman Mike Cusick.