



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Sportsmen: Important Changes for 2014

Patty Ritchie

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Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

If you're someone who enjoys outdoor activities, there's no better place to be than in Upstate New York. From snowmobiling and skiing in the winter, to fishing and boating in the summer, there are so many opportunities for sportsmen to enjoy all that our region has to offer.

If you're an outdoor enthusiast, you'll want to take note of important sporting license changes that went into effect on February 1, 2014. Adopted in last year's state budget, the changes are aimed at saving hunters and anglers both time and money through reduced license fees, reduced license types, changes to license dates and more. These license fees were increased in 2009, before I became your Senator. Since then, we've been working to roll back some of the increases and taking steps to get more New Yorkers to enjoy our great outdoors. To learn more about these changes, I encourage you to visit the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's website at www.dec.ny.gov.

In addition to lower license prices and other changes that will make things easier for outdoor enthusiasts, there's another important update for sportsmen that I would like to share. Just recently, I led a bipartisan group of more than a dozen state lawmakers in calling on Governor Cuomo to join in supporting the use of Side-by-Side recreational vehicles, or UTVs.

In a letter to the Governor, we urged him to amend his state budget proposal to allow UTVs, which are becoming increasingly popular with the elderly, couples and families. Our state is losing out on tens of thousands of dollars in state revenue through registration fees, and taxes from retail sales of UTVs, as well as countless tourism-related jobs by prohibiting UTVs, which because they are slightly larger than standard four-wheelers can exceed outdated weight limits in current law. This latest effort builds upon legislation I sponsor that would raise the defined weight of an ATV to 1,500 to allow certain UTVs to be registered in New York State. This legislation has passed the Senate in each of the last three years.

Not only are outdoor activities a lot of fun, they provide a major boost to our state's economy too. Each year, the Central and Northern New York regions host thousands of visitors from outside the area. It's these sportsmen who eat in our restaurants, stay in our hotels and purchase hunting and fishing necessities from our various shops throughout the region. The contributions by these outdoor enthusiasts are monumental, as they are responsible for generating more than \$1.5 billion in revenue annually for our state.

As your state senator—and someone who also truly enjoys outdoor activities—I'm looking forward to working to support initiatives that improve the experience for sportsmen. If you're an outdoor enthusiast with suggestions for ways to improve hunting, fishing and other activities in our state, I invite you to contact me at ritchie@nysenate.gov.