



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Critical Support for Seniors Included in New State Spending Plan

PATTY RITCHIE April 3, 2014

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### **Budget Raises Income Eligibility for EPIC program for the First Time Since 2001**

State Senator Patty Ritchie has announced the new State Budget includes increased support for seniors struggling to afford life-saving prescription medications.

Included in the new spending plan is an expansion of the Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage Program—commonly known as EPIC—which helps seniors supplement their out-of-pocket Medicare Part D drug plan costs. Approximately \$4.1 million in increased funding will be used to help expand the program by 10 percent—providing coverage to an additional 25,000 elderly individuals across the state.

“I’ve heard from countless senior citizens who say that one of the biggest challenges they face is paying for prescription drugs that have costs that continue to skyrocket,” said Senator Ritchie.

“In the past, I’ve fought to stop cuts to EPIC, and I’m thrilled that funding was once again included in our State Budget to support this vital program.”

Under the new State Budget, income eligibility for EPIC is expanded from \$35,000 to \$75,000 for singles and from \$50,000 to \$100,000 for married seniors. Income limits for the program have not been changed since 2001.

The EPIC program is responsible for helping more than 270,000 income-eligible seniors aged 65 or older, including nearly 10,000 in Jefferson, Oswego and St. Lawrence Counties.

The spending plan also includes a number of other funding initiatives aimed at supporting New York’s senior population, including:

- \$5 million for the Community Services for the Elderly Program, which provides services such as transportation assistance, respite care, and home delivery meals;
- \$875,000 for Elder Health/Alzheimer's Programs;
- \$200,000 for the Lifespan for Elderly Abuse, Education and Outreach;
- \$86,000 for the New York Foundation for Seniors Home Sharing and Respite; and
- \$31,500 for the Senior Action Council Hotline