



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Joins Elected Officials From Across the Northeast to Discuss Issues Facing Veterans

PATTY RITCHIE August 5, 2014

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Takes Part in First Meeting of “Task Force on Military and Veterans Affairs”

State Senator Patty Ritchie joined today with fellow members of the Council of State Governments “Task Force on Military and Veterans Affairs” to discuss ways to improve services and outreach to veterans and active members of our nation’s military.

The discussion was the first for the group, which is tasked with identifying key issues facing veterans and includes legislators and state officials from across the country.

“As the State Senator representing Fort Drum, I make it a priority to look out for the 18,000 soldiers, 20,000 family members and nearly 3,000 veterans who call our region home,” said Senator Ritchie.

“Being a part of the Task Force on Military and Veterans Affairs has afforded me the opportunity to learn from people across the country who are up against the same challenges our region faces in an effort to create more opportunities and improve services for the men and women who have fought for our freedom.”

Topics discussed today included:

- Improving education opportunities for veterans, including assisting younger men and women with their transition from deployment to college as well as the advantages of distance learning for veterans;

- Working to break down the stigma surrounding Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD);
- The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Children; and
- Decreasing poverty rates and improving benefits for members of the the National Guard and Army Reserves.

The group's findings will be utilized to help draft legislation aimed at aiding veterans in New York and other states. The task force is expected to release its report later this summer.

Senator Ritchie's serving on the Task Force on Military and Veterans Affairs is just one way she is working to support the former and current members of our nation's military. Her recent efforts include:

- Sponsoring a new law to help disabled veterans find employment by requiring state agencies to seek out veteran-owned businesses for government contracts;
- Securing critical funding to help defend Fort Drum from federal budget cuts;
- Sponsoring New York's new "Hire-a-Vet" tax credit that rewards employers with tax credits when they employ recently returning veterans;

- Securing special budget funding for three years to support veterans struggling with PTSD—in particular, 10th Mountain Division veterans who are returning to Northern New York from combat; and
- Annually hosting “10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Day” at the State Capitol in an effort to recognize the post as well as its soldiers for their service in addition to helping to raise awareness of the key role Fort Drum plays in our region and statewide economy.

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