



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Turns to Local Leaders for Mandate Relief Help

PATTY RITCHIE December 4, 2014

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Lowering Costs to Taxpayers by Recruiting Local Experts

State Senator Patty Ritchie is once again turning to leaders of local government, including newly elected members of the St. Lawrence County Board of legislators, to help eliminate unfunded state mandates and reduce costs for local taxpayers.

Senator Ritchie announced that she has named County Legislator Joe Lightfoot of Oswegatchie, and incoming Legislators David Forsythe of Lisbon and Larry Denesha of DeKalb to her Mandate Relief Working Group, which she created in 2011 to help deliver on her promise to reduce expensive mandates that drive up costs for counties and local governments. The group will be co-chaired by St. Lawrence County Legislator Kevin Acres of Madrid and Lightfoot.

Since then, the panel of city, county, village, town and school leaders has proposed two dozen recommendations, and several have been enacted into law.

“Unfunded mandates are like a hidden tax often imposed by faceless bureaucrats on local governments that drive up spending and costs to local taxpayers,” Senator Ritchie said. “While many are well-meaning, such as those that help protect people at work, and set standards to enhance public safety, often there are better, less expensive and less-burdensome ways to achieve those same goals.

“My Mandate Relief Working Group is already making a difference, identifying mandates that can be repealed or reformed, providing savings to local governments and relief for local taxpayers.”

In one example, the Governor recently signed legislation, recommended by the Mandate Relief Working Group and introduced by Senator Ritchie, that repeals a 20-year-old duplicative building inspection requirement for schools.

The rule included a 100-point questionnaire for school officials to complete each year even though they already were required to perform regular inspections under a separate law.

Another mandate identified by the group that was repealed was the so-called “ropes” rule which required local volunteer fire departments to equip every firefighter with costly, specially designed escape gear that was almost never used at rural fire scenes.