



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Weigh in and Make a Difference

PATTY RITCHIE December 29, 2014

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### Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

As your State Senator, one of the biggest—and most important—parts of my job is representing your interests in Albany. With the 2015 Legislative Session beginning soon, I'm looking to you to weigh in on the major issues that are expected to come before my colleagues and I in the coming months.

In an effort to accurately represent your interests, I'm inviting constituents in Jefferson, Oswego and St. Lawrence Counties to take part in my 2015 Legislative Survey. [Available here](#), the survey asks individuals to weigh in on major topics including government spending, Common Core, job creation, agriculture, funding for education, and others.

The Legislative Survey represents my latest effort to reach out to constituents for their opinions on major issues. In the past, input received through my surveys on topics such as education and outdoor recreation as well through forums on issues such as synthetic drugs and heroin abuse has been invaluable as I work to represent your interests in Albany.

I ask that all those wishing to take part complete the survey by January 21<sup>st</sup>. If you don't have access to a computer, please call my Watertown District Office at (315) 782-3418 to have a survey mailed to you.

In addition to inviting you to take part in my Legislative Survey, I would also like to take this opportunity to let you know about several new laws going into effect in the New Year:

***Long Term Health Care Insurance:*** In 2010, the Legislature enacted a law allowing end-of-life care for people in nursing homes to be financed by using accelerated payments from life insurance. Beginning in 2015, this legislation will change to allow this type of financing to be utilized for adult day care services, hospice, assistance from a long-term home health care providers and palliative care.

***Safeguarding Minors from Identity Theft:*** Beginning in 2015, credit agencies will be required to place a credit record freeze on the account of a minor when requested by a parent or guardian. This change will help prevent children from becoming victims of identity theft and stop thieves from using stolen information.

***Workers with Disabilities Tax Credit Program:*** Starting in 2015, business owners who employ individuals with developmental disabilities will be eligible for a tax incentive. The credit will equal 15 percent of the wages for qualified, full-time employees working at least 30 hours per-week. For part-time employees working at least eight hours per week, the credit will equal 10 percent.

***Making Adult Homes Safer:*** In 2015, adult care facilities and assisted living residences will be required to perform criminal background checks on prospective direct care staff for home care agencies as well as nursing homes.

Making our state a better place can only be accomplished when citizens take an active role by making their voices heard and their priorities known. As 2015 begins, I encourage you to share your views through my Legislative Survey. I'm eager to hear the opinions of the people in Central and Northern New York in an effort to make sure I'm accurately representing their interests when return to Albany.