



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Protect the Post: Ritchie Scores \$500,000 to Help Secure Future of Fort Drum

PATTY RITCHIE March 16, 2015

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### **Senator Also Wants Additional "Base Retention" Funding in New State Budget**

State Senator Patty Ritchie is announcing \$500,000 in new state funding to secure additional "buffer areas" around Fort Drum that are critical to preserving the future of the military post.

The \$500,000 comes from a special "military base retention" budget account, aimed at supporting efforts to enhance and protect Fort Drum and other military installations. This year, Senator Ritchie is seeking to increase funding for military base retention in the new state budget that's due April 1<sup>st</sup>. In recent years, she has played a key role in filling the account help preserve Fort Drum and other military installations across the state.

"Right now, more than ever, it's critical that we make protecting and enhancing Fort Drum one of our top priorities," said Senator Ritchie.

"By committing resources to the post, we're sending a message to Army leadership that New York is standing strong with Fort Drum. We're ready to welcome more troops and families to the North Country, we're ready to make investments that will help create jobs and boost the economy and we're ready to defend the post from any potential cuts."

Funding included in the Senate's proposed spending plan, which was adopted last week, totals \$3 million. While the Executive and Assembly spending proposals do not included funding for base retention, the Governor has allocated \$1.5 million in funding for buffer zones in his budget plan.

Senator Ritchie's announcement comes in advance of the Army's scheduled "listening session" on proposed troop reductions, which will take place Friday in Watertown. One of the factors examined by

Army leadership when weighing cuts, is how much buffer land has been purchased. Currently boasting buffer areas totaling 4,700 acres, Fort Drum is considered to be one of the most capable military installations, thanks in part to its ability to grow and utilize land for training without encroaching on neighbors. In addition, the buffer areas have also proven crucial to preserving adjoining farmland and helping family farmers in the area.

Senator Ritchie has worked to have \$2 million in each of the past two years included in the state budget for military base retention. In addition, she has previously scored funding for housing, health care investments and support for the Fort Drum Regional Liaison Organization, as well as additional buffer purchases.