



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Day Celebrated at State Capitol

PATTY RITCHIE March 17, 2015

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State Senator Patty Ritchie welcomed 10th Mountain Division Commanding General, Major General Stephen Townsend and troops to the Capitol Tuesday for 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Day.

The event—which is in its fourth consecutive year—celebrated Fort Drum and the 10th Mountain Division's contributions to the North Country region, the state and our nation. Joining General Townsend were Colonel Gary Rosenberg, Fort Drum Garrison Commander; Captain Scott Dawe, Commanding General's Aide; Lieutenant Colonel Tage Rainsford, Public Affairs Officer and more than four dozen soldiers and officers who serve with the 10th Mountain Division.

“Year after year, 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Day has allowed my colleagues in Albany to see firsthand the impact that the post and its troops have on our entire state—not just the North Country,” said Senator Patty Ritchie.

“It’s an honor not only to welcome these brave men and women to the Capitol, but also, to represent them as their senator. I would like to thank Major General Stephen Townsend and his troops for making the trip to Albany today and more importantly, for the sacrifices they make each and every day to defend our freedom.”

10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Day kicked off a week of efforts highlighting Fort Drum, in advance of the Army’s scheduled “listening session” on proposed troop reductions, which will take place in Watertown on Friday.

The highlight of the day was [an address by General Townsend](#) to senators in the historic Senate Chamber. General Townsend spoke about the unique capabilities of Fort Drum, including its ability to train troops in extreme cold weather, as well as the unique relationship between Fort Drum and the local community.

“When we deploy overseas we don’t worry about what’s happening on the home front. I tell folks all the time, when I was deployed last year to Afghanistan for almost ten months, I never once looked back over my shoulder and wondered what was happening at Fort Drum,” said General Townsend. “I knew that our soldiers back there, and our families were going to be well taken care of by the folks of Fort Drum and the North Country community.”

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH FORT DRUM DAY CEREMONY IN THE SENATE CHAMBER](#)

In addition, Fort Drum’s Color Guard opened up the day’s Senate Session, and [an official Resolution](#) was passed by lawmakers in both the Senate and Assembly to mark the event. Senator Ritchie also presented her colleagues with “challenge coins,” to honor Fort Drum, its officers and soldiers and to express appreciation to Senators on both sides of the aisle who have supported the post and its mission. The tradition of “challenge coins” traces back to the ancient Roman Legions, when Emperors would mint special coins to commemorate specific military victories. Soldiers could be required to show the coins when “challenged” as to their identities.

“I’m presenting each one of you with a challenge coin to honor our soldiers and also to thank you for stepping up and standing with me to help protect Fort Drum,” said Senator Ritchie as she spoke on the Senate floor.

[CLICK HERE TO READ THE OFFICIAL SENATE RESOLUTION](#)

The day-long event also featured displays by troops designed to educate people about the post's mission, a special briefing for lawmakers about Fort Drum and the 10th Mountain Division and meetings with state leaders throughout the day.

Home to 38,000 soldiers and family members, Fort Drum is the largest Army post north of North Carolina and east of the Mississippi River. In addition, the post also employs nearly 5,000 civilians and supports tens of thousands of jobs off base to support the North Country economy. According to a recent economic impact study, it was estimated that Fort Drum pumped roughly \$1.3 billion into the economy last year.