



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Senator Ritchie Delivers Funding to Protect Fort Drum, Strengthen Community Health Care

PATTY RITCHIE July 7, 2015

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### Investments Highlight Strong Army-North Country Partnership

Senator Patty Ritchie announced today she's secured \$650,000 in new state funding to help preserve the future of Fort Drum and strengthen health care services to soldiers and their families, as well as residents across the North Country.

The money comes from a special fund that Senator Ritchie helped create, along with her Senate colleagues, to protect New York military installations from looming federal cutbacks.

“Everyone in the North Country understands the importance of supporting and defending Fort Drum, our largest employer and a key to our region’s economy,” Senator Ritchie said. “This funding, coming on top of recent investments in housing, highways, infrastructure and health care, highlight the unique partnership that Fort Drum enjoys with the surrounding community.

“They’ll also make a difference in the quality of health care—and the quality of life—not only for Fort Drum’s soldiers and their families, but for people across the region.”

The new funds target four area hospitals that serve long-term residents, as well as members of the military. In addition, the Development Authority of the North Country will receive funding to help local governments coordinate planning and development projects that impact on the Army post.

***Carthage Hospital Area Hospital*** will receive \$150,000 to support emergency and operating room services, and for the hospital’s program that provides medical training to the Army’s own team of medical professionals.

***River Hospital*** in Alexandria Bay will receive a total of \$175,000 to assist in the expansion of its highly successful “River Community Wellness Program,” which provides treatment and support to troops and veterans struggling with PTSD.

***Samaritan Medical Center*** in Watertown will receive \$125,000 towards a major expansion of the hospital’s maternity area.

***Gouverneur Hospital*** will receive \$100,000 to help in the purchase of new state-of-the-art ultrasound equipment.

***DANC*** will receive \$100,000 to support local government planning and coordination with Fort Drum authorities, replacing a key role formerly played by Army planners that was lost to federal budget cutbacks.

“As one of the nearest health care facilities to Fort Drum, Carthage Area Hospital is often the first stop for Fort Drum soldiers and family members who need urgent, and even routine, medical care and treatment,” said CEO Rich Duvall. “The funding secured by Senator Ritchie will help us not only to improve the quality of that care, but also help prepare the Army’s own medical professionals get hands-on training to deal with medical emergencies on post and on the battlefield.”

“Soldiers returning home, and many other veterans, can suffer deep wounds caused by traumatic sights and sounds of combat—wounds we often cannot see,” said Ben Moore, CEO of Carthage Area Hospital. “The River Community Wellness program has been successful in offering soldiers a shoulder to lean on as they work to readjust to life after war. This support from Senator Ritchie will help us to expand our services so all those seeking help will be able to receive it.”

“As the region’s largest health provider, Samaritan Medical Center and our maternity area have been proud to help soldiers and civilians welcome their newest family members, and this funding provided by Senator Ritchie will help us reach our goal of expanding and improving maternity services,” said CEO Tom Carman.

“For parents, the first ultrasound—the first time they see their baby to be—is an extremely exciting time, and this technology also helps doctors and nurses in ensuring the good health of babies and moms alike,” said Marlinda LaValley, CEO of Gouverneur Hospital. “Funding secured by Senator Ritchie will help us to purchase new ultrasound equipment to improve the experience for the many military couples and countless other North Country residents.”

“Planning for the future growth of our communities often involves fact-finding and coordination among many levels of government and community groups in order to ensure the best decisions and the fewest negative impacts,” said Jim Wright, DANC’s Executive Director. “With these funds secured by Senator Ritchie, DANC will be able to fill a role that was once performed by the Army itself in helping communities with projects that could have an impact on the post, and make sure that everyone is working together to secure the Fort Drum’s future.”

The bulk of funding announced today comes from a special “base retention” fund that was included in the State Budget at Senator Ritchie’s request, and as an initiative of the Senate’s Republican Majority.

Over four years, the fund has included \$12 million that’s been locally used to help relieve a housing crunch in the area surround Fort Drum, expand health care options and to pay farmers and others to preserve open space “buffer zones” near the post that allow military training operations to continue. Earlier this year, Senator Ritchie committed \$500,000 from the fund to help with additional buffer purchases.

Army planners are considering major cutbacks to US troop strength that could have a major impact in the future of Fort Drum and other military installations. The Army is expected to announce its plans in the coming weeks.