



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Getting in the trenches to cut the red tape and help you

PATTY RITCHIE July 12, 2011

Last week, Albany backed down from a plan to ban the age-old practice of selling hand-cut cheese at Farmers Markets. The issue arose when bureaucrats decided to reinterpret a 40-year-old rule that had never before been applied in this way.

As soon as I heard about the change, I started drafting legislation to exempt Farmers Markets from the rule. Like the practice of cutting fresh cheese, Farmers Markets have been around for years, but they are becoming increasingly popular, as consumers are looking for ways to buy more locally produced foods.

That's benefited our family farmers and led to the creation of countless small, locally owned businesses, and insisting that bureaucrats return to using common sense can only help them grow.

Small business owners were also my mind when I got involved in the dispute over boating rights along the US-Canada border. An incident involving a US boater who was detained by Canadian authorities was sending a terrible message to the thousands of tourists who enjoy our Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River shoreline communities in the summertime, and support over 1,000 local jobs.

While that issue isn't completely resolved, I am working with Canadian Senator Bob Runciman to make sure overzealous rules like this don't hurt our economy.

Sometimes cutting through the red tape means getting answers for local communities, or freeing grants that have been tied up in the maze of state government. That was the case with a \$500,000 grant that had been promised to the Village of Pulaski in Oswego County to replace a storm-damaged retaining wall along the Salmon River.

I have been working with Albany officials for months to release these funds after similar grants were cancelled, and I was able to deliver the good news last week that the money is finally on the way.

There's also the case of the Central New York "Gold Star Mother" who was forced to turn in her distinctive license plates she displayed to honor her only son, who was killed in Vietnam, when she decided it was time to hang up the car keys. I tapped into my long experience as County Clerk to find a way to return those plates when others said it couldn't be done. Returning those plates to that mother was one of the most emotional days I've had since I became Senator.

I've not been afraid to get in the trenches when it helps the people and communities I serve—literally.

The very first bill I passed, and that Gov. Cuomo has signed into law, saved taxpayers in four Jefferson County towns hundreds of thousands of dollars they were paying in unnecessary interest costs for an important sewer project.

And some of the other bills I've sponsored—and of which I am most proud—deal with cutting red tape on farmers, local governments and small businesses.

In these many small ways, I can see firsthand how government can make a difference in the lives of individuals and our larger communities. That's why I got involved in the first place, and why I will continue to listen, and to work for you.

If you have an issue with government, or think that I can help with another problem, call my office, send an email, or find me on Facebook.