



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

ONE SIZE WON'T FIT ALL

PATTY RITCHIE August 15, 2011

I ran into an Amish carpenter recently who told me he'd been receiving a series of letters from angry state bureaucrats who were upset with him because he had not filed his taxes electronically.

His problem was pretty simple.

He's Amish so he does not own a computer or even know how to operate one. His religion forbids him from using one even if he had access to one.

He also doesn't have broadband or even a dial up telephone.

I contacted the State tax department on his behalf and the commissioner agreed that my Amish neighbor could continue filing his taxes on paper.

That's why both he and I were surprised when he began receiving a new series of letters telling him that he had not filed his sales taxes properly. When my office contacted the State, they were told my Amish friend had not included his telephone number in the documentation, so it had been rejected.

I pointed out the Amish don't have phones. The state has agreed it is now going to take a look at the way it handles these issues because I am afraid there are more than just several

hundred Amish families being affected as New York State agencies move into this brave new digital age by requiring everyday people to fill out forms electronically over the Internet.

I run into people all the time who tell me the Amish are not the only ones who are being left behind in New York's efforts to force everyone into the Digital Age. A lot of small business people don't use computers and don't want to be forced to use them.

The reality is that in this era of instantaneous communication, there are a lot of regular people who don't own a computer, don't want to use one and have no patience with them. They don't like big government efforts to impose a one size fits all approach to dealing with people.

As your representative in Albany, I've been trying to make your State government more responsive to your needs by trying to reduce burdensome rules and regulations.

With New York State facing a stubborn recession, a stagnant economy and sky high unemployment rates, I have focused a lot of my efforts on rooting out these foolish bureaucratic rules that have given New York the most unfriendly business climate in the nation.

I believe that by bringing a little common sense to Albany, we can make it a friendly and welcoming place, not just for the Amish and small businesses, but for all of us.