



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## CELEBRATING PLANET EARTH: SENATOR RITCHIE'S WEEKLY COLUMN

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Every April, we celebrate our planet with “Earth Day,” a special commemoration established in 1970 as a way to highlight the importance of protecting the environment. Today, Earth Day is celebrated across the globe on April 22nd and in many places, isn’t limited to just one day, as throughout the entire month a spotlight is placed on what we can do to protect the planet.

In recent weeks, dozens of students from throughout Central and Northern New York have been hard at work on submissions for my annual “Earth Day Poster Contest,” which helps young people across our region raise awareness about the need to take steps to protect the environment. This year’s theme is “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle,” and student posters will soon be available for viewing here on my website.

Looking to get involved in efforts to protect our planet? Here are a few easy ways to do so:

***Tackle your spring cleaning:*** As we head toward warmer temperatures, there will be more opportunities to get outside and clean up the trash and other debris that was once buried beneath piles of snow. If you have questions on how to dispose of certain items—including larger items, or hazardous waste—please be sure you’re doing so appropriately. Those living in Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties can get more information at [www.northcountryrecycles.org](http://www.northcountryrecycles.org). If you live in Oswego County, please visit [www.co.oswego.ny.us/dsw](http://www.co.oswego.ny.us/dsw).

In addition, in an effort to help people across our region clean up their yards and roadsides, I will be hosting a series of free tire recycling events in Oswego County—happening on May 14th and June 18th—and in St. Lawrence County, happening on April 30th and May 14th. Details on the events will soon be available on my website, [www.ritchie.nysenate.gov](http://www.ritchie.nysenate.gov), or by calling (315) 782-3418.

***Take a walk—or a bike ride:*** If you are able to, consider walking or biking to work or any other place you need to go that is relatively close by. Walking and biking helps the cut down on our overall use of fossil fuels and electricity—plus, is good for your health!

***Add a little extra green to your yard:*** From removing harmful chemicals from soil to helping to reduce global warming, trees play a vital role in protecting the environment. They help save

energy too, as it's estimated that the net cooling effect of one, young tree is equivalent to ten room-size air conditioners operating 20 hours per-day. If you have space in your yard, take time to plant a tree and help improve the environment at the same time.

***Use reusable shopping bags:*** Next time you head to the grocery store, consider bringing reusable bags with you. Not only do they help reduce waste, many stores will give you a discount for using your own.

Earlier this month, we took a steps in Albany to protect our planet by approving a new state budget plan that includes a record level of funding for the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF). The new spending plan includes an unprecedented \$300 million—a 70 percent increase over the prior year's funding—to help protect our natural resources.

Even the smallest change can have a big impact when it comes to protecting the environment. As the month of April draws to a close, I hope you will continue to take steps to improve our planet for today, as well as future generations.