



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY LAWMAKERS, OFFICIALS TALK MANDATE RELIEF WITH NORTH COUNTRY SENATORS IN ALBANY

PATTY RITCHIE May 24, 2016



Lawmakers and officials from St. Lawrence County sat down with State Senators Patty Ritchie, Joseph Griffo and Betty Little in Albany Tuesday to talk about efforts to relieve local government of burdensome mandates, as well as other issues affecting the North Country.

“When it comes to making our region a better place it’s so important to be able to hear firsthand about what we can do at the state level to help our counties more easily balance

their budgets and deliver vitally important services to taxpayers,” said Senator Ritchie.

“I would like to thank representatives from St. Lawrence County for visiting me today in Albany, and for sharing their suggestions of how we can work together to make life better for those who live in the North Country.”

Representatives of St. Lawrence County at Tuesday’s meeting included St. Lawrence County Legislature Chair John Burke, Legislator Travis Dann and Legislator Larry Denesha, as well as County Administrator Ruth Doyle.

During the meeting County officials thanked Senator Ritchie for her advocacy on a number of mandate relief measures, including:

- Legislation she cosponsors (S.6341) that would require the state to take over the cost of indigent defense services. Currently, governments are required to pay for an attorney for defendants who cannot afford to hire their own. Rather than paying the tab, New York passes most of the cost along to its local counties, causing a severe strain on local budgets and costing St. Lawrence County over \$2 million annually;
- A measure sponsored by Senator Ritchie (S.4964-B) which would to provide mandate relief to counties by allowing them to retain more money collected at local DMV offices for work done on behalf of the state. Currently, county clerks retain just 12.7 percent of fees collected. Under Senator Ritchie’s legislation, the amount would increase to 25 percent. Additionally, the bill would allow county clerks to keep 60 percent—up from 30 percent—of the \$30 fee collected for the processing of non-driver identification cards;

- Senator Ritchie's legislation to provide video conferencing technology in the Workers' Compensation district offices in St. Lawrence County, a change that would relieve local injured workers from having to travel long distances to participate in proceedings. Prompted by the 2013 closure of the Workers' Compensation Board hearing center in Canton, which forced injured workers to travel to Watertown or Saranac Lake for hearings and other proceedings, under Senator Ritchie's measure, claimants and their representatives would be able to participate via video conference; and
- A measure (S.7408) cosponsored by Senator Ritchie that would stop Albany from passing the buck to counties by making the state cover the full cost of mandated salary raises for district attorneys (DAs), which total \$1.6 million statewide.

In addition, the group also discussed legislation recently introduced by Senator Ritchie (S.7832) that would allow the St. Lawrence County Sheriff to act as an additional firearms licensing officer.