

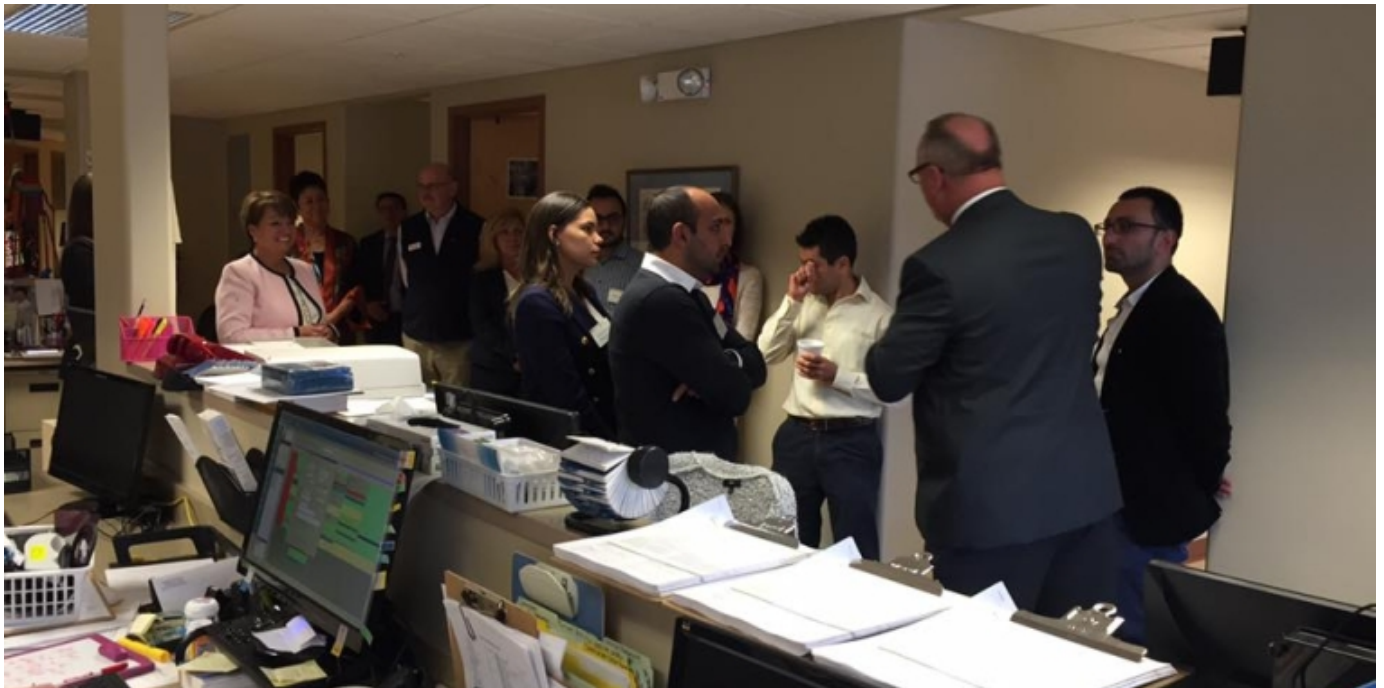


NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## "Taking A Look" At Careers in Medicine

JOHN FRIOT   October 3, 2016



As someone who has lived in the North Country her entire life, I know there's nothing like the beauty and sense of community that exists in our region of the state. And while there are positives, we face a number of obstacles too. As co-chair of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, I'm working to address those challenges and identify ways to make this great part of our state even better.

Last month, I had the opportunity to welcome medical students who are currently studying at downstate medical facilities to our region for what are known as “Take a Look Tours.” Organized by the Iroquois Healthcare Association and made possible through \$100,000 in state funding I successfully advocated for, the tours took future physicians to a number of local hospitals—including Oswego Health and Port City Family Medicine in Oswego, Samaritan Medical Center and North Country Family Health Center in Watertown, River Hospital in Alexandria Bay and Gouverneur Hospital—and gave them a glimpse at what it would be like to practice medicine in our region.

According to a recent study by the Healthcare Association of New York State (HANYs), almost three-quarters of New York’s rural hospitals do not have enough primary care physicians to meet current patient needs, making efforts like the Take a Look Tours even more important. The recent HANYs survey also found that:

- Half of rural hospitals surveyed have had to reduce or eliminate services due to lack of provider ability;
- 81 percent of hospitals indicated that primary care physicians are “very difficult to recruit;”
- Thirty percent of New York’s physicians are over the age of 60

I am acutely aware of the obstacles and challenges that come with recruiting and retaining doctors in our Upstate communities. But with those challenges comes opportunity and a chance to match our beautiful region with doctors in various practices, while at the same time providing accessible health care for our residents.

Our beautiful region has a lot to offer and it is my hope that by bringing physician residents to the area and giving them an opportunity to visit our hospitals, clinics and communities, they will be inspired to return, make their homes here and contribute to the strengthening of rural medicine.

(Attn. photo editors: Senator Ritchie is pictured in the attached photo at Gouverneur Hospital, a stop on the recent "Take a Look Tour.")