



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## The Next Step Toward A New State Budget

PATTY RITCHIE March 21, 2017



In recent weeks, my colleagues and I have been hard at work crafting a new state budget that will help meet the needs of our state, and create new—and better—opportunities for all New Yorkers.

Just last week, the Senate approved its 2017-18 one-house budget. The spending plan includes key funding for agriculture, libraries, infrastructure, record investments in school aid and more that will help strengthen our region. Highlights of the spending plan include:

- A restoration of \$12 million in support for agriculture, as well as \$3 million to assist farmers affected by last summer's severe drought, the creation of a "Farm-to-Table" online map to direct consumers to locally made products and the creation of a "Young Farmers Advisory Council" to utilize the experiences and vision of the next generation of agriculture professionals to help craft state farm policy;
- Record investments in schools, totaling \$25.4 billion, which more than doubles the Governor's Foundation Aid proposal;
- A new TAP initiative —known as the Enhanced Tuition Assistance Program (ETAP)—that helps students and middle class families by increasing the minimum TAP award from \$500 to \$3,000 and the maximum to \$5,500;
- Key funding for transportation and water infrastructure, including \$513 million in Consolidated Local Street and Highway Program (CHIPS) funding—which is \$75 million over what was originally proposed in the Executive Budget—as well as \$8 billion for clean water projects;
- \$8 million in support for libraries over what was originally proposed in the Executive Budget and \$15 million over what was originally proposed in the Executive Budget for library construction grants;

- \$3 million in “base retention funds” to protect New York State military bases, including Fort Drum;
- Support for my proposal to create a seasonal trail pass program for Canadian citizens, which would help make it quicker—and more convenient—for Canadian snowmobilers to ride in New York State and in turn, help boost the economy; and
- My plan to raise the weight limit on ATVs, which would allow for the registration of side-by-side models increasingly popular among sportsmen, seniors and families—and at the same time, generate revenue for the state, as well as help to support local businesses.

The Senate’s spending plan reflects the priorities of communities here in Central and Northern New York. As we continue to work toward a final enacted state budget, I’ll be fighting strongly to see that the needs of our region are met and that smart investments in things like job creation, education, agriculture, infrastructure, libraries and more are made priorities. To stay up to date on my efforts, be sure to visit my website, [www.ritchie.nysenate.gov](http://www.ritchie.nysenate.gov) or my Facebook page.