



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Honoring America and Those Who Served: Senate Passes Bills on Gold Star Mothers, Flag Displays and to Punish "Stolen Valor"

PATTY RITCHIE May 24, 2017



Just ahead of the Memorial Day Weekend, State Senator Patty Ritchie is announcing the Senate today approved several bills she cosponsors that honor America and those who have served their country.

"It is so critically important to honor the memory of our fallen heroes who have made the ultimate sacrifice while defending our nation," said Senator Ritchie. "Measures approved by the Senate today do that, as well as encourage patriotism and serve to remind us of how

lucky we are to live in the land of the free and the home of the brave.”

Measures cosponsored by Senator Ritchie that were OK'd by the Senate today include:

Senate bill 2538-A: This measure, which Senator Ritchie cosponsors with Senator Joe Griffo would ensure that Gold Star Mothers—mothers of U.S. Armed Forces members whose sons or daughters died in the line of duty—would have the option to keep special license plates designating them as Gold Star Mothers. Unfortunately, when a Gold Star Mother surrenders her plates, they do not have the option to keep one for sentimental reasons. This legislation would direct the Commissioner of the DMV, upon request—and at no cost—to provide Gold Star Mothers with keepsake plates.

The bill, which has passed the Senate numerous times, was prompted by the 2011 case of Ethel Barnes, a Gold Star Mother from Cato, who was forced to surrender the plates that honored her only son, Robert, who was killed in a Vietnam jungle in 1967. Mrs. Barnes was told she couldn't keep the plate when she decided she could no longer drive. After hearing of Mrs. Barnes dilemma, Senator Ritchie intervened, and won the return of the plate from the DMV.

Senate bill 1124-A: This measure would provide for an increase in the rates of compensation for Gold Star Parents, who are parents who have lost a son or daughter in the U.S. Armed Forces in the line of duty. Since 2008, the Gold Star Parent Annuity—which helps to recognize the emotional and potential financial implications of losing a child—has not been increased. This measure would allow the Gold Star Parent Annuity to increase by an annual cost of living.

Senate bill 4007: This measure enacts the "American Made Flag Act of 2017" to require that American flags purchased for use by the state government be made in the United States

Senate bill 4539: This measure would protect the right of tenants of rental property to display the American flag. Current law provides protections for homeowners to display the American flag on their property, however, these same protections are often times not provided to those who rent property.

Senate bill 957-A: This measure establishes the new crime of stolen valor, which is impersonating the men and women who bravely serve our country for the purpose of obtaining money or other benefits. The bill would also direct that a stolen valor fee be assessed against those convicted, and that the fee be deposited in to a Veterans Remembrance and Cemetery Maintenance Operation Fund.

Senate bill 944: This bill allows absentee ballots casted by service members who die in action before the date of the scheduled election to be counted.

(Attn. photo editors: Gold Star Mother Ethel Barnes is pictured in the above photo in 2011 after Senator Ritchie returned her “Gold Star Mother” license plates to her)

