



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Working to Fight Insect-Borne Disease This Summer

SENATOR PATTY RITCHIE June 22, 2018

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Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

Summer is finally here and people are getting back outside to enjoy the warm temperatures and beautiful scenery here in Central and Northern New York. However, the more time we spend outside, the more we have to be on the lookout for certain insects and the diseases they carry.

These pests, such as mosquitoes and ticks, continue to threaten the safety of those in our communities. As Deputy Vice-Chair of the Senate Health Committee, I understand just how

critical it is people are not only aware of the problem, but we all understand as much about these bugs as we can.

Just recently, the New York State Senate approved legislation to fund numerous efforts to combat Lyme and other tick-borne diseases. Our region has seen a significant increase in cases of Lyme disease over the last decade. The funding, totaling \$1 million included in the state budget, will increase education, research, prevention and treatment options.

Protecting ourselves from insects and the diseases they carry is important for everyone—but it is especially important for our young people. That is why I recently teamed up with area school districts to provide vital information on Lyme disease and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE). Before the school year ended, informational materials were given to students to bring home and share with their families. Since 2012, I have distributed more than 150,000 of these pamphlets to students.

In addition, I have also secured \$175,000 in the state budget to fund mosquito eradication and EEE prevention efforts in Central and Northern New York. While everyone is at risk of EEE, it tends to have the biggest effect on our most vulnerable, those younger than 15 and older than 60. Unfortunately, there is no vaccine for people.

There are a number of things we do know, and can be doing, to better protect ourselves as we enjoy the outdoors, including the following:

- Cover your skin as much as possible by wearing long sleeves, pants and socks when out in grassy or wooded areas;

- Use insect repellent containing DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus on your clothes and exposed skin. Remember to always follow all directions and precautions on the product label;
- Consider staying indoors during peak mosquito biting hours, which is at dusk and dawn. However, some mosquitoes bite all day;
- Make sure all windows and doors have screens and check them for rips and tears; and
- Drain standing water anywhere in your yard, including pool covers, buckets, birdbaths and flowerpots to keep mosquitoes from breeding and laying their eggs.

These efforts are just the beginning of the work we need to do to protect ourselves from insects, and namely ticks and mosquitoes. As the summer continues, I will continue to keep you posted on the work I am doing to achieve this important goal. For updates, be sure to visit my website, www.ritchie.nysenate.gov.