



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie, Blankenbush and Walczyk Launch Petition to Protect North Country Prisons

BRIAN DWYER February 20, 2019

| ISSUE: **PRISONS**



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Following the Governor's proposal to close three New York State prisons in 2019, Senator Patty Ritchie and Assembly members Ken Blankenbush and Mark Walczyk are calling on the public to show their support for local correctional facilities by signing a petition to protect North Country prisons.

Last week, in amendments to his Executive Budget proposal, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced his plan to close up to three New York State prisons by September 1st. If the proposal is approved as part of the new state budget, the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision would review operations at facilities statewide and select up to three for closure.

“Every day, dedicated correctional officers and prison staff members put their lives on the line to see that our region’s five correctional facilities are the safest and most efficient in the state—and we need to make sure everyone, and especially the Governor, knows that,” said Senator Ritchie.

“Not only do these prisons play a vital role in the safety of our state, they also support thousands of local jobs and are critical to the economic well-being of our region. As the representative of a region whose district includes five correctional facilities, I am encouraging people to sign this petition and tell Albany that closing North Country prisons just does not make sense.”

Senator Ritchie, Assemblyman Blankenbush and Assemblyman Walczyk believe that if prisons must close, closing downstate prisons would cause much less harm to their communities. Those prisons also happen to sit on much more valuable land. The land on which Sing Sing Prison in Ossining sits, on the East Bank of the Hudson River, was recently valued at almost \$600,000 per acre.

"Closing prisons and forcing the incarcerated population into fewer, overcrowded facilities has made our correctional system more dangerous for brave officers and inmates alike. Assaults have spiked. Gang activity and drug use is on the rise. We should be standing up for our correction officers and promoting a safe work environment for them. That means keeping existing upstate facilities open and staffing them properly," said Assemblyman Ken

Blankenbush.

“Correctional officers risk their safety every day to keep our communities safe from the dangerous convicted criminals our justice system locks away,” said Assemblyman Mark Walczyk, who recently, after being sworn into office toured Ogdensburg, Riverview and Cape Vincent Correctional Facilities.

“During a time when the state should be looking at ways to support job growth and creation, I have deep concerns with the ripple effect closing upstate prisons would have on the regional economy. Instead, we should be looking to make our facilities safer for both correctional officers and inmates by removing double bunks. However, if there are going to be discussions about closing state prisons, those talks should start and end with New York State’s most expensive facilities, which are located downstate. I am proud to be standing alongside Senator Ritchie and Assemblyman Blankenbush, defending our region’s prisons and the brave men and women who walk the line every day that help keep us safe.”

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