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STATE OF NEW YORK

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RURAL RESOURCES

August 31, 2011

Hon. Nirav R. Shah, M.D., M.P.H.  
Commissioner of Health  
NYS Health Department  
Corning Tower  
Albany, NY 12237

Dear Dr. Shah:

I am writing to you as a follow up to my earlier letter of Aug. 15, and with regard to my growing concern with a newly confirmed case of Eastern Equine Encephalitis, this time involving a horse livestock in St. Lawrence County.

In my earlier letter, prompted by the tragic EEE-related death of 4-year-old Maggie Wilcox of Oswego County, I asked for an update on your efforts to control the spread of the disease, which has claimed five lives in Central New York since 1971.

I worked with Oswego County officials and your office to help restart spraying earlier this month for mosquitoes in areas where the virus has been detected. Taken together with other common sense steps to avoid exposure, this still appears to many the best way to prevent its spread and avoid another tragedy like the death of 4-year-old Maggie Wilcox.

Today's news of an EEE-infected horse in St. Lawrence County confirms our worst fear that the virus has not remained confined to Oswego County, however. And the lasting effects of Hurricane Irene means the potential for hundreds more pools of standing water that can serve as breeding grounds for infected mosquitoes.

This crisis demands the highest level, coordinated response from public health officials and others who hold high office in state government. I am therefore expanding my request for information about steps that the state is taking to track the virus throughout the region and further prevent its spread through spraying and other measures. In particular, I would like you to provide information concerning your plans to monitor the disease. To what extent has spraying been undertaken to prevent the spread of mosquitoes in St. Lawrence County? What steps will now be taken?

**REPLY TO:**  **ALBANY OFFICE:** ROOM 815 LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247 (518) 455-3438  
 **JEFFERSON COUNTY OFFICE:** 317 WASHINGTON STREET, ROOM 418, WATERTOWN, NEW YORK 13601 (315) 782-3418  
 **OSWEGO COUNTY OFFICE:** 46 EAST BRIDGE STREET, FIRST FLOOR, OSWEGO, NEW YORK 13126 (315) 342-2057  
 **ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY OFFICE:** 330 FORD STREET, OGDENSBURG, NEW YORK 13669 (315) 393-3024

**E-MAIL:** RITCHIE@NYSENATE.GOV  
**WEBSITE:** WWW.RITCHIE.NYSENATE.GOV



Ever since EEE emerged in the state exactly 40 years ago, its impact has been most dramatically felt in Central and Northern New York counties, though a smaller number of cases have also been identified in other regions of the state. But even though its effects are most severe locally, it is far from a “local” problem. EEE has already taken a terrible toll in terms of human lives lost and, because it is also an agricultural disease, it also threatens a critical segment of our entire state’s economy.

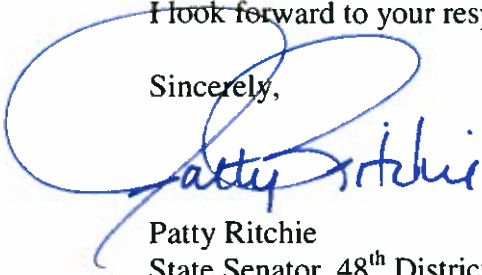
New Yorkers need reassurance that the state is taking every possible step to understand the disease, identify the risks, and prevent its spread both among livestock and humans.

Toward that end, I am today requesting that the state Senate’s Health Committee convene a public roundtable as soon as practicable, into the state’s response to this public health crisis.

In the meantime, I would urge you to continue your efforts, and urge you to provide maximum information to the public concerning these steps. Please know that I stand ready to assist you in any way that I can.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Patty Ritchie  
State Senator, 48<sup>th</sup> District

cc: Hon. Darrel J. Aubertine, Commissioner  
NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets

Hon. Joe Martens, Commissioner  
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

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Senate Finance Committee Chair John DeFrancisco  
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