



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Darrel J. Aubertine

Protecting the Foundation of New York's Number One Industry

DARREL J. AUBERTINE November 19, 2009

| ISSUE: **AGRICULTURE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENERGY**

| COMMITTEE: **AGRICULTURE**



Senate Ag Chair Aubertine Hosts Public Hearing on the Issues Facing New York Farmers

WATERTOWN (November 19, 2009)—State Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Darrel J. Aubertine today held a public hearing in Watertown to discuss the critical issues facing agriculture here in the North Country and throughout New York State.

“We are working to address many concerns in Albany, most critically our budget deficit. However, that does not change the fact that agriculture is our number one industry and must be part of our state’s plans to emerge stronger from the recent economic downturn,” Sen. Aubertine said. “The input we gather here

today along with what we've heard at roundtables throughout the state will be used to better address the needs and concerns of farmers, agribusinesses and all associated with our agriculture industry."

Agriculture in New York State is a multi-billion dollar industry that supports hundreds of thousands of jobs beyond those on the farms. These small to mid-sized businesses make up the backbone of our state's economy supporting jobs in sales, machinery, banking, insurance, tourism, retail and many other sectors of the state's economy.

The New York State Senate Standing Committee on Agriculture has a long and successful history of working for the betterment of the agriculture industry. The committee is dedicated to ensuring that although buffeted by the current economic crisis and threatened by many negative trends New York State's number one industry will remain strong and vibrant well into the future. New York simply cannot afford to lose another industry. This hearing solicited testimony on several topics:

- The Dairy Crisis
- Farm Worker Fair Labor Practices Act
- General Employment Issues
- DOT Rural Highway Regulations
- Mandate / Regulatory Reform
- Energy Concerns—Alternative Energy Technologies, Cost of Energy, Net Metering

The hearing, titled "Protecting the Foundation of New York's Number One Industry," held from 1-4 p.m. at Jefferson Community College, was designed to help the Senate Agriculture Committee and all lawmakers to improve New York's agricultural industry through better understanding of the issues facing the agriculture community. The hearing is recorded, testimony submitted into the official record, and will be analyzed by the committee and Senate leadership to help shape policy and craft legislation.

"It's great to see that New York State is taking leadership in the dairy crisis. New York State should be very proud of Senator Aubertine," said Bryan Gotham of Gotham Family Farm LLC, Hammond. "I testified today about the unanswered questions that I have in the dairy industry. We need better more accurate information and recognize the influence that imports such as MPCs are having on the volatility of our milk price and displacing up to two percent of the milk supply. We also need to develop policy that at least covers the average farmer's production costs or reduce those costs. If we fail to at least cover the average farmer, then the American dairy industry could be wiped out."

"I appreciate the fact that Sen. Aubertine has created this opportunity for agriculture to have a voice directly back to the Senate Agriculture Committee," said Jay Matteson, Jefferson County Agriculture Coordinator. "All too often we try to take action at the local level, whether by sending a letter or passing a resolution, that you send away and you never know what happens to it. Now we're feeding information directly to the Senate Ag Committee and we know we're being heard. We have an opportunity to influence legislative outcomes. We also appreciate that he's brought it here to the farmers here in the North Country and we have the opportunity to have that impact we haven't had before thanks to Sen. Aubertine. There's no question that we're being heard today."

"New York Farm Bureau and Senator Aubertine have been partners in preparing these roundtables and this hearing and I appreciate the strong working relation we have with the Senator," said Dean Norton, president of the New York Farm Bureau. "These discussions allow the stakeholders to discuss the myriad of issues from the dairy crisis to the Farm Worker Fair Labor Practices Act. It's very important that we

work through the minutia as it pertains to farm worker labor and get right down to the truth of what's really going on, on our farms on a daily basis as it pertains to our farm workers and our farm employers. ”

“A sound economic future for our state depends on agriculture and this industry should be a focal point in our economic development efforts,” Sen. Aubertine said. “This hearing is for us to hear your ideas, your concerns and collect that information. From the dairy crisis to the opportunities presented by a growing alternative energy industry, this committee is committed to strengthening our agriculture industry.”