



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Darrel J. Aubertine

Aubertine Hosts Agriculture Roundtable in Waddington

DARREL J. AUBERTINE December 11, 2009

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Agriculture Chair Concludes Fall/Winter Tour with discussion on dairy, farm labor

WADDINGTON (December 11, 2009)—State Senate Agriculture Chair Darrel J. Aubertine today met with a large group of farmers and agriculture representatives to discuss the issues facing our state's farmers and the direction of agriculture policy in New York State.

“Agriculture is the foundation of our state economy, but too often gets left out of discussions about economic development and job creation,” Sen. Aubertine said. “From Montauk to Massena and Jamestown to Albany, these forums are intended to give farmers a seat at the table in setting policy for New York State. Our farmers and agribusinesses help support hundreds of thousands of jobs throughout this state and the ideas, concerns and suggestions of the agriculture industry must be heard.”

The roundtable today concludes a series of roundtables, tours and appearances this fall and winter that included a public hearing in Watertown on Nov. 19, and stops in Heuvelton, Eden Valley, Jamestown, the North Fork region on Long Island, Morrisville, Ithaca, Warsaw, Copenhagen, Liverpool, Lowville and Granby. These meetings have fostered discussion on topics ranging from milk protein concentrates, consumer education and country of origin labeling, to milk hauling fees, regulations and labor.

A summary of the findings in the forums will be posted to the Senator’s Web site when complete and be used to support efforts to protect and improve the state’s agriculture industries. Today in Waddington, farmers discussed the Senator’s legislation to eliminate milk hauling fees for farmers, the impact of MPCs on the price farmers are paid for their milk, proposed trucking regulations for highways in the Finger Lakes region, country of origin labeling, property taxes, and the Farm Worker Fair Labor Practices Act. The farmers also thanked the Senator for his role in helping make dairy farmers eligible for discount power through the North Country Stimulus Program, which provides these farmers and businesses a 9 percent discounts on electric bills for 12 months.

“It’s great that the Senator is holding these forums and getting out here to the farmers,” said Sanford “Sandy” Stauffer, of Stauffer Farms LLC, a dairy farm, and board member with DairyIea and Dairy Farmers of America. “A lot of the milk issues are national and if he can get the ball rolling, for instance in the hauling, that would be the way it has to work. With milk pricing it’s the same way. We appreciate his efforts on these issues as well as the state issues like truck routes, CAFO regulations and farm labor.”

“Some of the issues are national in scope, there’s only so much the Senator can do in New York’s political structure,” said Ralph Child, of Childstock Farms, a produce farmer in Malone.

"I came here today for the proposed labor bill and to counter the downstate sentiment that there is slave labor in New York State. We have employees who like working for us, come back every year. Because of the programs we're in we pay our workers around \$10 per hour with housing and transportation. I do appreciate the Senator's interest in these issues and his efforts to explain our agriculture industry to his downstate colleagues."

"For farmers to pull together for an event like this, the outcome is very positive," said Donald J. Mitchell, dairy farmer, of Mitchell Farms in Hammond. "Senator Aubertine is doing a great job collecting input from the farmers. We should have strong stability in this country whether you milk 40 cows, 400 cows, or 4,000 cows. Everybody's milk matters and MPCs should be taken out of the market. His bill to change the labeling on products with MPCs is part of the solution because without these imports, we're a dairy deficit nation and farmers would get a fair price for their milk."