



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

## O'Mara reappointed Chair of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee and also named Vice-Chair of Transportation Committee

THOMAS F. O'MARA January 10, 2017

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**Elmira, N.Y., January 10**—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats), beginning his fourth term representing New York's 58th Senate District, has been reappointed Chairman of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee and has also been named Vice-Chair of the Senate Transportation Committee.

Senate Majority Leader John J. Flanagan announced the appointments late today at the Capitol. O'Mara has headed the Environmental Conservation Committee since 2015. He has been a member of the Transportation Committee since 2011.

One of the Senate's key committee assignments, O'Mara said that he hopes to continue the Environmental Conservation Committee's focus on numerous regional and statewide challenges including: soil and water conservation and quality; water infrastructure development and improvement; energy-related demands including the development and promotion of cleaner sources of energy; preservation initiatives impacting farmland, forests and other state resources; brownfields cleanup; solid and hazardous waste management; invasive and endangered species; and fish and wildlife conservation.

"These challenges and issues confronting New York are vital to the overall environmental and economic well-being of the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, and the state as a whole," said O'Mara, who served as a member of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee prior to becoming its chair two years ago. "I appreciate having the confidence of the Senate leadership to continue this challenging assignment and strengthen some of the important foundations we've built the past two years."

O'Mara pointed to several achievements as highlights of his tenure as the committee's chair, including:

- > last year's enactment of the nation's first law requiring public schools to test their drinking water systems for lead contamination, which O'Mara sponsored and led the fight to enact;
- > as part of the 2016-17 state budget, a fully funded, \$300-million Environmental Protection Fund (EPF). The EPF supports critical environmental and economic initiatives including clean air and water projects, flood control and restoration, and farmland preservation;
- > the establishment of the "Water Quality Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2015" to help localities across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes, and statewide, undertake water infrastructure improvement projects including sewer and pipeline repairs. O'Mara and Senate Republicans fought for the program's establishment as a priority. O'Mara hopes that it will continue to serve as a model for transforming the state-local partnership to the benefit of local communities, local economies and local property taxpayers; and
- > the extension of the state's brownfields cleanup program for 10 years and refocusing it on the cleanup of polluted properties Upstate.

O'Mara said that he remains committed to working with his legislative colleagues and the governor to strike a reasonable, sensible balance between environmental conservation and protection, and the need to spark and strengthen economic growth and private-sector job creation regionally and statewide. He said that environmental conservation- and protection-related issues have long been a focus of his service in the Legislature. His legislative district encompasses the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions where agriculture, including the hub of the state's wine-and-grape industry in the Finger Lakes, and tourism are economic foundations.

In addition to chairing the Environmental Conservation Committee, O'Mara will serve as Vice-Chair of the Transportation Committee – another key Senate assignment.

“The ongoing renewal of our regional and statewide transportation infrastructure is one of the most critical priorities we face for economic growth, job creation and overall community development. I look forward to this new opportunity to keep the focus on this priority and continue working to strengthen New York’s commitment, particularly to the improvement, maintenance and redevelopment of local roads and bridges statewide,” said O’Mara, noting that local roads and bridges account for 87% of the roads, 52% of the bridges, and 48% of the vehicle mileage logged in New York State.

Over the past several years, O’Mara and Assemblyman Phil Palmesano (R,C,I-Corning) have worked to build a strong, bipartisan coalition within the Legislature working closely with local highway superintendents, county executives, mayors and other local leaders from every corner of the state in support of local roads and bridges. Their efforts have helped increase CHIPS funding by \$125 million from 2013 to 2016. In the 2016-17 state budget, for the first time since 2010, there is also parity in funding between the five-year state Department of Transportation (DOT) and Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) capital plans. O’Mara said that in addition to \$438 million in direct CHIPS funding, the current state budget also includes an additional \$400 million (\$100 million a year over four years) of funding for local roads that will be allocated through the CHIPS funding formula from a newly established PAVE-NY program. Another \$400 million from a new BRIDGE- NY program for local bridge and culvert projects will also be allocated statewide with local input.

In addition to his chairmanships, O’Mara will also serve as a member on the following eight Senate committees: Agriculture; Banks; Codes; Energy; Finance; Insurance; Investigations and Government Operations; and Judiciary.

O’Mara will also continue to serve on the following three special Senate task forces: Heroin and Opioid Addiction; Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases; and Workforce Development.

He stressed that all of his committee assignments will allow him to focus on many of the key issues still facing the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, including strengthening industries like agriculture, manufacturing and tourism, environmental conservation, public safety and criminal justice, and transportation challenges.

“It continues to be a full and enormously challenging plate of assignments. I’m grateful for the opportunities to provide input that moves us forward in positive directions and produces results,” O’Mara said. “These committees directly impact so many of the key issues facing our localities, from the future of farming and manufacturing to tax relief and overall Upstate job creation. These assignments offer the chance for direct input on a range of policy areas critical to the short- and long-term future and strength of our local communities and economies.”

The 58th Senate District is comprised of Chemung, Schuyler, Steuben, and Yates counties, and a part of Tompkins County (the city and town of Ithaca, and the towns of Enfield, Newfield, and Ulysses).