



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara blasts Farm Wage Board decision (Read and Watch more here)

THOMAS F. O'MARA January 28, 2022

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Elmira, N.Y., January 28—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) tonight blasted the decision by the state's Farm Laborers Wage Board to recommend rolling back the current 60-hour-per-week overtime threshold for farm workers beginning in 2024.

The three-member Board, by a vote of 2-1, handed down its decision just hours after closing the last of four virtual hearings on the issue earlier today. Board member David Fisher, President of the New York Farm Bureau, voted against the recommendation.

O'Mara released the following statement:

"It's clear that this was a preordained decision by this Wage Board. The hours of testimony from farmers, farm workers, farm advocates, agricultural representatives and community leaders were still echoing across this state in near-unanimous opposition to lowering the overtime threshold, and the Board took no time at all before coming out with a disastrous decision.

"It was a charade all along. I and many others warned that this is where the Wage Board was headed from day one. It was put in place only to keep paving the way for the far-left, so-called progressive political agenda that dominates Albany Democrat decision-making. It had no meaningful or serious concern for the future of family farms and agriculture in New York State.

"The Board heard from countless individual farmers and the leaders of local farm communities. It heard from the industry's top advocates, including the New York Farm Bureau, the Northeast Dairy Producers Association, Grow NY Farms, and numerous others. It heard from local, federal, and state representatives, like myself, who fear the undermining and ongoing collapse of an industry and, equally important, a way of life that has defined the regions we represent for generations.

"The Board ignored us all. They ignored common sense and caution in favor of continuing this relentless pursuit of an extreme political agenda and philosophy that will drive this state over the edge of a fiscal and economic cliff.

“In fact, Governor Hochul signaled today’s Wage Board decision in her proposed state budget not long ago by proposing a tax credit for overtime costs. She has clearly been determined to finish what former Governor Cuomo set in motion two years ago.

“If left to stand, it will change the face of New York State agriculture as we have known it for generations. It will produce a nightmare of a ripple effect across local communities and economies in every region of this state – but especially upstate in regions like I represent throughout the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes. It will profoundly diminish the future of high quality, local food production. It will spark the loss of family farms and the loss of the livelihoods these farms support across the industry and throughout hundreds of local economies.”

O’Mara testified before the Board last Thursday to express his strong opposition to lowering the threshold.

[View O’Mara’s January 20th testimony [HERE](#). Read his full written testimony [HERE](#).]

In 2019, he strongly opposed the legislation, known as the “Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act,” creating the Wage Board when it was enacted by then-Governor Andrew Cuomo and the Democrat-controlled State Legislature.