



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

## Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of December 4, 2023 -- 'Remember, shop small and buy local'

THOMAS F. O'MARA December 4, 2023

| ISSUE: **COMMERCE AND SMALL BUSINESS**



Senator O'Mara offers his weekly perspective on many of the key challenges and issues facing the Legislature.

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Senator O'Mara offers his weekly perspective on many of the key challenges and issues facing the Legislature, as well as on legislative actions, local initiatives, state programs and policies, and more. Stop back every Monday for Senator O'Mara's latest column...

This week, **"Remember, shop small and buy local"**

Since the annual "Small Business Saturday" holiday shopping campaign was launched in 2010, it has been a record-setting success, according to the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) and others, generating an estimated total of approximately \$184 billion in consumer spending at small businesses nationwide.

Nevertheless, it remains wedged between all the hype surrounding Black Friday and Cyber Monday and, consequently, the underlying message bears repeating as the holiday shopping season kicks into high gear this December: Small businesses are the backbone of the economy and local job creation. Shop Small. Buy Local.

There is no denying that consumers increasingly go online to do their holiday gift buying nowadays. Yet the closer we get to Christmas Day, the more shoppers still return to "brick-and-mortar retail." Fortunately, there's still a shop down the street or around the corner that can turn out to be the best destination for finding that perfect (and meaningful) gift.

NFIB President Brad Close recently wrote, "Every dollar you spend at a small business will find its way back into the community, whether through sponsorships, wages and benefits for local employees, or new jobs. The more you shop at these job creators, the better ... Small businesses have accounted for two out of every three jobs over the past 25 years, and they want to keep providing jobs and opportunity. They also want to keep giving back to their communities, as the main sponsors of everything from local sports teams to school events."

The head of the federal Small Business Administration (SBA) has defined the idea of shopping small this way: “Small businesses are the fabric of our communities. By shopping small ... we can support the men and women who are building these amazing small businesses. It’s a chance to say thank you to the small business owners who do so much for our communities.”

Small business owners -- in many instances, small business families -- play fundamental roles in local economies here at home and, collectively, across New York State and the nation. The SBA notes that over the past two decades small businesses have been responsible for creating two out of every three net new jobs in the country. More than one-half of all of America’s workers, according to federal statistics, own or are employed by a small business.

I always look forward to this annual opportunity to recall the following words from the National Federation of Independent Business/NY: “It’s about the entrepreneurs and families who have put everything into stores that offer what the chains and e-commerce companies don’t -- something different, something special, from handcrafted gifts to genuinely friendly service ... When you shop at a small business, you’re supporting your hometown, your neighborhood and your neighbors.”

A National Retail Federation survey has found that by mid-December, the average consumer has only completed less than half of his or her holiday shopping. With this in mind, as we head out the door in the busy days ahead, there’s nothing to keep us from setting aside at least one stop along the way to support a local small business somewhere across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes.

I look forward to seeing some of you out there, including at one of our local tree farms to give a boost to this vital, locally grown industry. The Empire State is one of America’s largest producers of locally grown and cut Christmas trees. New York ranks fourth in the nation in

acres (19,000) dedicated to growing Christmas trees, which generate an estimated \$13.8 million economic impact statewide.

Consequently, I'll close with a reminder for everyone who has not yet put up a holiday tree. The website of the Christmas Tree Farmers Association of New York (CTFANY) makes it convenient to locate one of the state's 875 tree farms, including numerous farms throughout our region: <http://www.christmastreesny.org>.

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