



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Senate Majority Conference Leaders Hold Upstate Summit on Economic Development

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Photo Caption: Brian Reeves, an Onondaga County vegetable grower and New York Farm Bureau board member, discusses the Farm Labor Fair Practices Act with Senate Majority Conference Leader John Sampson. State Sens. Darrel J. Aubertine, chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, and David J. Valesky, Senate Vice President Pro Tempore, joined Mr. Reeves in explaining the pitfalls of the bill, which is opposed by many farmers and farm workers. Sen. Sampson indicated that the bill in its current form is not expected to move through the Senate, and he would like to see input from New York Farm Bureau and farmers incorporated into an amended bill before action is taken.

SYRACUSE (October 26-27, 2009)—The Senate Majority Upstate Caucus today hosted Senate leadership for the first day of a two day summit to address the economic development needs

of Upstate New York. Senate President Malcolm A. Smith and Conference Leader John Sampson joined the Upstate Caucus to meet with economic development officials and businesses throughout the day.

The lawmakers attended an agribusiness forum at Wegman's regional offices in Liverpool and a roundtable discussion with businesses and officials at the Metropolitan Development Association offices in Syracuse.

"In these difficult economic times, it is critical that we remain focused on economic development as a means to grow the economy and truly emerge from this fiscal crisis," said Sen. Darrel J. Aubertine, chair of the Senate Majority's Upstate Caucus and the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources. "Upstate New York must play a central role, be it through agriculture, energy, the new green economy, tourism or any of the many industries we have here with the potential to grow. Through these discussions, we are keeping Upstate New York at the top of our priorities in the Senate."

"In order for all parts of the state to thrive, we must ensure that businesses across the state are provided with the necessary resources so that New York can revitalize and strengthen its economy," said Senate President Malcolm A. Smith. "The conversations taking place today and tomorrow in Syracuse will allow us to obtain a firsthand perspective on the issues impacting agriculture, small businesses, travel and tourism upstate, so that we can take this information back to Albany and begin to make real changes for the people of New York. We expect the Upstate Caucus to help drive the agenda for the New York State Senate in 2009-10 and it is critical to us because of the challenges we face."

"The agriculture sector has been the source of billions of dollars in revenue to the state and these roundtable discussions will begin the much needed dialogue to create new jobs and boost the state's economy," said Senate Majority Conference Leader John L. Sampson. "In

light of the crisis on Wall Street and one of the largest budget deficits since the Great Depression, it is essential to identify alternative sources of income to ensure New York remains the financial capital of the world.”

“We are working to develop new strategies to help improve the profitability of our local agricultural community,” said Senator William T. Stachowski, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Economic Development and Small Business. “The Upstate Caucus has brought farmers and expert business counselors together in a way that will create more successful opportunities for farmers and area agriculture-based businesses and help broaden the economic base of Upstate in general. We must do everything possible to make it easier for our farming communities to thrive in New York. They are truly the key to the health of our economy.”

Senator Neil Breslin said, "New York State is blessed with land to be used for agribusiness and wind energy and some of the best colleges and universities in the country. We have attracted biotech companies and 'green' businesses alike. The ideas and suggestions discussed at the roundtable meetings were invaluable and the future of Upstate economic development encouraging."

“Upstate New York's strengths in agriculture, green technology, higher education and manufacturing will play a large role in moving the entire state out of recession,” said Senator David J. Valesky. “The meetings we are conducting this week underscore the Senate's commitment to continued investment in economic development and job creation in the region.”

"I am confident that today's meetings continue to reaffirm our commitment to Upstate New York's economic development," said Senator Antoine Thompson. “Partnership with and input from the private sector is critical to comprehensively streamlining and reforming existing

economic development programs that we hope will yield benefits upstate."

"I am pleased to work with my colleagues in the Senate Majority to place upstate and suburban communities as a top priority on our agenda," said Senator Brian X. Foley of Blue Point on Long Island. "From legislative action to economic development programs, we are fully committed to helping working-families throughout the state prosper, with a sharp focus on boosting commerce and investment in upstate and suburban portions of the state," said Foley, who participated in the Upstate Caucus Summit, in light of his work on issues affecting residents outside New York City.

At the Agribusiness in Upstate Roundtable, lawmakers discussed the strengths and successes of the Upstate Region in the agribusiness sector, opportunities to grow and build on innovative practices and programs in the region.

"Agriculture is our number one industry in New York State and must be at the forefront of our conversations on economic development," said Sen. Aubertine, who is also chair of the Senate Agriculture and the Senate Energy and Telecommunications committees. "As we work to help our dairy farmers in the current crisis and protect the infrastructure that supports all agricultural businesses, it is important we work to build for the future in a variety of agricultural industries."

The roundtable featured Jim Bedient, a Yates County grape grower, Tim Harner, general counsel for the Upstate Niagara Cooperative, David McClurg, vice president of marketing for the New York Apple Association, Paul Speranza, vice president and general counsel of Wegman's, Julie Suarez, director of public policy for the New York Farm Bureau, and Jim Trezise, president of the New York Wine and Grape Foundation.

At the Economic Growth and Development In Upstate Roundtable lawmakers discussed innovative economic development efforts and methods New York can use to improve new York's economic development programming.

The roundtable featured Steve Dimeo, president Mohawk Valley EDGE, Garry Douglas, president of the North Country Chamber of Commerce in Plattsburgh, David Griggs, director of business development for Buffalo Niagara Enterprise, Matt Hurlbutt, managing director of business development for Greater Rochester Enterprise, Brian McMahon, president of New York Economic Development Council, Ken Pokalsky, senior director of government affairs for the Business Council of New York State, Robert Simpson, president of the Metropolitan Development Association, Michael Tucker, president of the Center for Economic Growth, Craig Turner, senior director of public policy of the Buffalo-Niagara Partnership, and Ben Walsh, executive director of the New York State Urban Council and director of urban initiatives for the Metropolitan Development Association.

In its second day, the Senate Majority Upstate Caucus continued to demonstrate the importance of Upstate New York to the agenda of the State Senate to Senate leadership.

Senate President Smith and Conference Leader Sampson took part in presentations on Upstate tourism and arts, after taking a tour of the new Carmelo K. Anthony Basketball Center at Syracuse University.

“The leaders in the Senate Majority have shown an interest in Upstate New York, be it our agriculture, our business and manufacturing, our tourism, our athletics or our arts,” said Sen. Aubertine. “While we in the Senate Upstate caucus have made it our jobs to stress the needs and priorities of Upstate, bringing Senators Sampson and Smith here to see what we have to offer first hand is important to advancing the issues and needs of Upstate New York in the coming session.”

Sen. Valesky said, "Upstate New York's cultural arts and tourism play a vital role in economic development. We have had some great successes here in Central New York, with well-attended festivals, art exhibits and national conventions, that engage our resident population and attract thousands from across the country. We need to keep investing in these areas, because they will help strengthen the Upstate economy."

"Tourism and the arts have been overlooked for way too long," said Senate Majority Conference Leader Sampson. "These industries are a source for millions of dollars in revenue and I am hopeful today's discussions will generate innovative initiatives needed to bring real economic opportunity and development to all of New York State."

"Today's discussion will allow us to continue to expand the many recreational activities and resources available in Upstate New York," said Senate President Smith. "This part of the state abounds with resources, from skiing and hiking in historic parks to art museums and cultural festivals. It is important we continue to grow and develop these unique assets to strengthen the Upstate economy going forward."

Senator Breslin said, "Upstate New York has an abundance of tourism opportunities with all of our beautiful mountains, lakes and state parks. Tourism represents a strong part of our economic development plan and supporting small businesses across the region catering to skiers, boaters and other sports enthusiasts is crucial. Our quaint villages and towns offer excellent antique shopping and historic buildings and museums to explore. These roundtable meetings have provided exciting ideas and opportunities to expand tourism economic development in beautiful Upstate New York."

"We have a fantastic variety of seasonal activities, abundant natural resources, unique historic sites and cultural institutions throughout Upstate New York," said Senator Stachowski. "These important round table discussions will help us design new ways to

promote economic development through Upstate tourism, and enable us to keep encouraging travelers to explore all that Upstate New York has to offer."

Senator Jose M. Serrano said, "As Chair of the Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation Committee, this has been an incredible opportunity to listen to the successes and concerns of those who are directly connected to tourism and the arts in Upstate New York. Both of these industries have tremendous potential to serve as catalysts for economic growth during these difficult fiscal times. It is my hope that we can tap into these resources so that everyone will have the opportunity to experience all that New York State has to offer."

The Upstate Caucus is comprised of Sen. Aubertine, Sen. Valesky, Sen. William T. Stachowski, Sen. Neil D. Breslin, and Sen. Antoine M. Thompson, all of whom have teamed with Sen. Brian X. Foley and Sen. Craig Johnson, both of Long Island, on issues vital to our state's suburban and rural communities. On Monday, the Caucus held forums on agriculture and economic development with Sens. Smith and Sampson.

In the morning on Tuesday, the Senate leaders and caucus members toured the athletic facilities of Syracuse University and talked with SU Athletic Director Daryl Gross and SU Basketball Coach Jim Boeheim, before meeting at Dinosaur BBQ in downtown Syracuse for a Tourism & Economic Activity in Upstate roundtable to discuss best practices and successes in tourism initiatives throughout the region, and highlight gaps in the state's tourism programs and policies.

The lawmakers met with Kelly Blazosky, president of the Oneida County Convention and Visitor Bureau, Fred Bonn, director of the Ithaca-Tompkins County Convention and Visitor

Bureau, Peg Coleman, president of the Steuben County Conference and Visitors Bureau, Gary DeYoung, director of tourism for the 1000 Islands International Tourism Council, Janice Fox, president of the Lake George Regional Convention and Visitor Bureau, Dan Fuller, president and CEO of Bristol Mountain, Ed Healy, vice president of marketing for the Buffalo Niagara Convention and Visitor Bureau, David Holder, president of the Syracuse Convention & Visitor Bureau, Dan Murphy, president of the New York State Hospitality and Tourism Association, Tiffany Townsend, director of communications for NYC & Co., Mary Kay Verba, director of the Dutchess County Tourism/NYS TPA Council, and Jim Walter, executive director for Madison County Tourism.

In the Arts and Development in Upstate roundtable, lawmakers discussed innovative initiatives and best practices in New York State's arts efforts, as a catalyst for economic development.

Participants included Michael Chamberlain, vice president of the board of the Music Theatre Festival, Guy Cosentino, executive director of the Stardust Foundation of Central New York, Peter Dunn, president and CEO of the Central New York Community Foundation, Kathy Goldfarb-Findling, executive director and Dirk Sonneborn, director of operations for the Gifford Foundation, Diana Gurieva, executive vice president of the Dyson Foundation, Marilyn Higgins, vice president of Community Engagement and Economic Impact at Syracuse University, Jackie Mahoney, grant making director for the Bender Family Foundation, Dr. Kheli Willetts, academic director of the Community Folk Art Center, Meg O'Connell, executive director of the Allyn Foundation, and Peter Fleischer, executive director of Empire State Future.