



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Barclay, Ritchie React to Birds Eye Closure

PATTY RITCHIE April 18, 2011

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Assemblyman Will Barclay (R,C,I—Pulaski) and Senator Patty Ritchie (R,C—Oswegatchie) today said they are disappointed that the owner of the Fulton Birds Eye plant has announced the company will close the plant in six months.

“I am saddened and deeply disappointed by the company’s decision to close the Fulton plant,” said Senator Ritchie. “My first concern is for the workers and their families who are directly impacted by this announcement.”

“While Fulton has suffered damaging blows to its manufacturing over the past few decades, we need to keep in mind that the Birds Eye plant offers a lot of advantages to any company smart enough to see the advantages the city offers,” Senator Ritchie said. “Fulton is home to an experienced work force. It is close to Central New York’s productive vegetable growers. And it is a relatively short distance from the largest concentration of consumers in America. Together we can use these assets to help market this plant.”

“This announcement is a tragedy. I’m troubled and concerned about these jobs being lost and the facility’s future,” Assemblyman Barclay said. “When Pinnacle Foods announced it was acquiring the Birds Eye Plant in December 2009, I heard from several workers who were concerned about what this would mean to their livelihoods. My office reached out to

Pinnacle Foods with a letter, questioning what this would mean for the Birds Eye Processing plant and what the plans were for the facility so central to Fulton's economy. I also welcomed a meeting with Pinnacle. Sadly, we never received a response to either request."

Under Birds Eye, the plant saw many upgrades, including expansions that more fully automated production so that it could expand its food lines. According to reports, about \$5 million was invested in the plant under Birds Eye's ownership. Barclay said with these upgrades, he is hopeful the plant and property will be attractive to a prospective buyer—a buyer that will supply good-paying jobs to our region that already has a skilled workforce.

"I've been in touch with local officials and am working with Senator Ritchie and her office to move quickly to replace the jobs that will be lost with this closure. I will also do all I can to work through state and local agencies to see that this process is made simple for any prospective buyer," added Barclay.

"Assemblyman Barclay and I have reached out to Lt. Governor Robert Duffy, who is leading Governor Cuomo's economic development efforts, to urge him to bring together the full force of New York State's job creation and preservation services, including tax credits, low cost power, business assistance and workforce development programs," Senator Ritchie said. "This should be the newly established regional economic development council's first priority when it is called into session. We will work with the New York State Labor Department and other agencies to assist the workforce with benefits and retraining opportunities the state provides in these cases."

Senator Ritchie and Assemblyman Barclay said together, they have reached out to the New York Power Authority, the state Empire State Development, the Oswego County IDA, plant owner Pinnacle Foods, Fulton Mayor Ronald Woodward, New York Farm Bureau, Oswego County officials and others to discuss the announcement.

