



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie, Farm Bureau Say, 'Let NY Farm'

PATTY RITCHIE January 27, 2012

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The New York Farm Bureau has thrown its formidable weight behind my bill, the “Let New York Farm Act,” naming it as one of the year’s top priorities.

As the chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I want to reduce farm based taxes, fees and regulatory burdens imposed on New York’s 36,000 family farms.

When I became Senator, the Empire State’s agriculture community was reeling from the 76 percent cut in state funding for critical farm programs. I went to work to convince the Governor and the Legislature that, if we really wanted to help create new jobs and business, we had to make the agriculture community our partners in getting the economy back on track, and we restored the vital agricultural research, marketing and education programs that had been a regular target for cuts by Albany’s budget makers.

Since then, I’ve been listening to farmers and agribusiness owners to get their ideas on ways to help farmers grow. My committee held hearings from Long Island to Western New York, and I tapped a group of local agribusiness leaders and farmers to serve as my advisory committee so I could have the benefit of their ideas and insights.

In all of these meetings and forums, I heard that what farmers need most is for government to just get out of their way – “Let New York Farm.”

Crushing taxes, fees and endless paperwork are stifling investment and forcing farmers to spend more time pushing pencils and cutting red tape than actually farming. We need to remove the obstacles farmers so they compete and win against increasing global competition,.

You’ve probably heard that New York is considered one of the worst places to do business in the nation.

Farmers tell me it’s even worse for agriculture. But we’re making progress to turn that around.

Last year, I was able to win passage of several key pieces of legislation to improve the business climate for farmers and help strengthen agriculture:

- We cut red tape on growers;
- Repealed outdated regulations on food retailers;
- Gave a boost to the growing “equine” farm business;
- Introduced wine-based frozen desserts to NY consumers

None of these measures were possible without reaching across the political aisle, and working on a bipartisan basis with my colleagues in the assembly.

Once again, I want to push politics aside to get even more done.

I’ve teamed with the Farm Bureau and Assembly Agriculture Committee Chair Bill Magee on the “Let New York Farm Act.” Among other provisions, this bill, S.4340, would:

- Protect and strengthen local agricultural districts;
- Reduce permit fees for agricultural projects;
- Target tax credits to agricultural operations, and simplify record-keeping requirements;
- Exempts farm wineries from overly burdensome reporting requirements, and
- Exempt rented farm vehicles from highway use tax, and reduce farm-plated vehicle fees.

If you’d like to know more about how I’m helping family farmers and agribusinesses, you can read the Senate Agriculture Committee’s annual report.