



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara reappointed to Rural Resources Commission; in a mostly downstate- and urban-oriented State Legislature, bipartisan group works to keep focus on rural issues, challenges

THOMAS F. O'MARA February 14, 2013

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**Albany, N.Y., February 14**—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R-C, Big Flats) has been reappointed as one of five state senators who will serve on the joint, bipartisan Legislative Commission on Rural Resources.

O'Mara's reappointment to a second consecutive two-year term on the Commission was announced by the Senate leadership this week.

“The simple fact is that the New York State Legislature is dominated by downstate urban and suburban legislators. So the Rural Resources Commission offers a valuable platform for keeping at least some of the Legislature’s attention focused on largely upstate, rural challenges like agriculture, broadband development, conservation, education, health care and jobs,” said O’Mara, whose 58th Senate District is comprised of Chemung, Schuyler, Steuben and Yates counties, and a portion of Tompkins County (the city and town of Ithaca, and the towns of Enfield, Newfield and Ulysses). “The commission has long been noted as a voice of rural New York. I’m proud to be part of the work we do on the needs of rural communities and economies here in the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, and statewide.”

O’Mara noted that area Assemblyman Phil Palmesano (R-C, Corning) and Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton (D-Ithaca) are also members of the commission, which is currently chaired by western New York Senator Catharine Young (R-Olean).

The commission, commonly known as the Rural Resources Commission, was established by the Legislature over three decades ago. It was created in 1982 to examine the impact of rural communities and industries on the state economy; review existing state laws and regulations impacting rural regions; assess the effectiveness of state programs and services affecting the needs and problems of rural areas; and develop recommendations for the Legislature to enhance and protect New York’s rural resources. It’s comprised of 10 members – five from the Assembly, and five senators.

Approximately 44 of New York’s 62 counties are designated as rural, including all of the counties O’Mara represents, and the Commission has worked on a range of issues including

agriculture, economic development, universal broadband, education, land use, transportation, local government structure and functions, volunteer recruitment and retention, and health care.

“How these issues are addressed at the state level has an enormous impact on many local communities,” O’Mara said. He noted that his legislative district encompasses Cornell University in Ithaca, which he praised for its leadership on rural issues through Cooperative Extension and many other Cornell-sponsored initiatives. Legislation developed by the Commission in 2008, which became law, made Cornell home to the nation’s first legislatively established “Center for Rural Schools.”

“Cornell University has long played a leading role in rural affairs nationally and in New York. It makes sense for the Rural Resources Commission to further develop a working partnership with the university to promote a shared vision and common goals for rural New York’s future. I’ll be looking forward to opportunities to keep making this partnership as productive as possible,” O’Mara said.

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