



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senators propose 'Grown in New York' plan to strengthen NY agriculture ~ O'Mara says action needed to keep farmers from being 'taxed, regulated and priced out of business'

THOMAS F. O'MARA March 5, 2013

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**Albany, N.Y., March 5**—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R-C, Big Flats), a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, and his Senate Republican colleagues today unveiled “Jobs & Progress--Grown in New York,” a comprehensive economic development strategy for agriculture that they believe can help keep New York State’s leading industry competitive

for the next generation.

“We need to keep taking actions that keep our farmers competitive for the long haul. We can’t risk New York State’s farmers being taxed, regulated and priced out of business. The ‘Grown in New York’ plan is a bold, common sense blueprint to keep New York a proud and strong agricultural state,” said O’Mara, who also serves as one of 10 members on the Legislature’s joint, bipartisan Commission on Rural Resources. “Farming has been a mainstay of upstate New York’s culture and economy for centuries, and it remains the backbone of many of our communities. But the challenges and the competition are tougher than ever.”

[\[watch Senator O'Mara's comments at today's news conference highlight help for New York's grape-and-wine industry as part of the "Grown in New York" plan\]](#)

O’Mara and his colleagues were joined at a news conference today in Albany by statewide farming advocates, including [New York Farm Bureau](#) President Dean Norton. New York’s 36,000 farm families help make New York’s \$5.2 billion agricultural industry a national leader.

Norton said: “NY Farm Bureau has long held to the proven belief that when you grow New York's farms, you grow New York's economy. The efforts put forth today by Senate Republican Leader Skelos, Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Ritchie and their conference colleagues will do just that. We appreciate their hard work to lower the high cost of farming to help ensure the next generation of farmers can continue the time-honored tradition of providing healthy, local food to the people of this state and the world.”

Cornerstones of the Senate Republican “Grown in New York” plan include [O’Mara’s recent call](#) for the elimination of a proposal by Governor Andrew Cuomo for a five-year extension of a higher utility tax first imposed on New Yorkers in 2009, the so-called 18-a assessment

that hits farmers already facing high energy costs especially hard.

“New York State can’t just settle for a policy of ‘no new taxes.’ The overriding goal needs to be tax cuts, especially job-creating tax cuts for upstate’s leading industries. We have to start cutting taxes for agriculture, manufacturing and other industries because getting New York off the bottom of the list of states with the worst tax climates in America is the best hope for turning around the fortunes and the future of upstate,” said O’Mara, who also serves on the Legislature’s joint, bipartisan Commission on Rural Resources.

O’Mara said that the Senate Republican “Grown in New York” plan, which they hope to have approved as part of this year’s state budget, focuses on tax cuts, regulatory reform, market expansion and a series of other economic growth initiatives. In addition to eliminating the proposed utility tax extension, other parts of the plan include provisions to:

- limit the annual increase in agricultural assessments to no more than two percent;
- encourage the state Department of Agriculture and Markets to dedicate additional resources to better promote farmers’ markets statewide;
- improve farmers’ access to customers by expanding farmers’ markets and food hubs, as well as call upon New York’s Congressional delegation to work to eliminate a severe and unreasonable Canadian tariff that serves to keep New York wines out of that potentially lucrative international market;
- expand the availability and use of New York-grown products by establishing a goal of at least 20 percent of food purchases by state and local government agencies to include locally produced items;

- accomplish estate tax reform. Farming is a land and capital intensive business, and the value of even an average-sized farm can easily exceed the current \$1 million estate tax threshold. That makes it more difficult to keep generations-old farms in the family, and forces many farmers to make the difficult choice of subdividing or selling off farmland in order to pay tax bills. Senate Republicans support increasing the estate tax threshold to \$5 million to better reflect rising farm and land prices;
- establish farm savings accounts. The average age of farmers in both the United States and New York is approximately 57 years old. A growing percentage of all farmers are aged 65 and above. To encourage younger people who want to pursue careers in farming, Senate Republicans will advance legislation to allow tax-free savings accounts to be used for the purchase of farms by young people, and to be used as a vehicle for farmers to help cover unexpected expenses and losses related to farming;
- undertake a comprehensive regulatory review to slash red tape and eliminate outdated and duplicative regulations;
- restore funding for the Tractor Rollover Program that provides help to New York farmers to purchase and retrofit tractors with rollover protective structures (ROPS). The program rebates 70 percent of the cost of purchasing and installing the ROPS, up to \$765. Tractor accidents are the number one cause of fatalities on the farm; and
- provide incentives to return idled farmland back in production, including tax credits equal to one-fourth the capital costs for specified land improvements.

[see attachment below for additional details on the "Grown in New York" plan]