



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senate approves 'Dairy Farm Energy Assistance Fund' ~ O'Mara co-sponsors legislation, calling it a 'wise investment in the future of upstate dairy farms'

THOMAS F. O'MARA May 30, 2013

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Albany, N.Y., May 29—The New York State Senate today approved legislation co-sponsored by Senator Tom O’Mara (R-C, Big Flats) to establish a “Dairy Farm Improved Energy Efficiency Loan Fund.”

The legislation (S.1081/A.4021) passed the Senate by a vote of 60 to 1.

The proposed new loan fund, which would be administered by the New York State Energy and Research Development Authority (NYSERDA), would provide state grants and low-interest loans to help dairy farmers undertake energy efficiency projects and purchase cutting-edge energy technologies.

“Energy is one of a dairy farm's most burdensome expenses and our dairy farmers are particularly hard hit by high fuel and other energy costs,” said O’Mara, a member of the Senate Agriculture, and Energy and Telecommunications committees. “This program could help farmers enhance energy efficiency or take advantage of new technology. It would be another wise investment in the future of upstate dairy farms, businesses and communities.”

Over the past several years many New York State farmers have struggled with extremely low commodity prices that, combined with high energy and feed costs, labor shortages and flooding, have had a tough economic impact on many milk producers. Additionally, many farmers have struggled with low milk prices, an outdated federal price control system and the escalating costs associated with running family farms.

Energy costs are particularly burdensome. Utilities have a harder time servicing farms because of their remote locations at the end of the electric grid infrastructure.

According to O’Mara, the proposed new Dairy Farm Improved Energy Efficiency Loan Fund would provide state assistance to help more dairy farmers utilize high-efficiency lighting, pumping and cooling equipment, and other energy management systems, and could result in significant energy savings and increased milk yields. It would also help accelerate the development of New York's energy services industry, providing new and expanded job opportunities.

Supporters of the proposed fund, including O’Mara, believe strengthening the energy systems of individual farms and developing micro-grids in remote areas will enhance the overall reliability of the electric system.

The legislation must be approved by the Assembly and signed by Governor Andrew Cuomo before becoming law. It’s currently in the Assembly Economic Development Committee and is sponsored by Assemblyman Dennis H. Gabryszak (D-Cheektowaga), who co-chairs the Legislature’s joint, bipartisan Commission on Rural Resources on which O’Mara serves as a member.