



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Ted O'Brien

Senator O'Brien discusses development of wine tourism industry

TED O'BRIEN July 31, 2013

| ISSUE: AGRICULTURE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ARTS AND CULTURE, RECREATION AND TOURISM, ALCOHOL



ROCHESTER, N.Y. – Senator Ted O'Brien was today joined by representatives of local wineries and tourism organizations to call for increased state efforts to support the growing wine and wine tourism industries in the Finger Lakes region. The Senator noted that these industries provide essential jobs and economic growth for upstate New York.

“The wine tourism industry has an enormous impact on our state economy, providing almost \$4 billion a year and bringing approximately 5 million visitors a year to our communities,”

Senator O'Brien said. "State government must continue its efforts to expand this industry and help these innovative companies do what they do best, grow and put New Yorkers back to work."

Winemaking, wine sales and tourism opportunities are helping to grow Upstate New York's national and even international profile. Tourism now employs around 1 in 12 New Yorkers and the Empire State has become the nation's third largest grape grower and second largest wine producer. The growth of this industry is a vital part of the continuing transformation of the greater Rochester and broader upstate economy.

Meeting with local industry leaders, tourism experts and educational and government leaders of the region, Senator O'Brien talked about both state promotional efforts for Finger Lakes wine and attempts to reduce regulatory burdens upon industry.

The Senator highlighted existing efforts such as state support for Finger Lakes Community College's viticulture program. Earlier this year, \$3.2 million in funding was awarded to FLCC to build cutting-edge facilities for the existing program. Graduates can continue their education by transferring to Cornell's four-year program and will be equipped with the skills and training necessary to fill good-paying job openings in a growing industry.

Senator O'Brien also discussed upcoming programs such as the "TASTE NY" themed informational displays and concession tents that will coincide with 200,000 visitors from throughout the United States and 47 other countries visiting Rochester for the PGA championship in Pittsford. The Senator applauded Governor Cuomo for his dedication to publicizing New York's agricultural products and growing New York's tourism industry.

AJ Shear, Communications Manager of the Finger Lakes Visitors Connection:

"Tourism in Ontario County infuses new dollars into our communities, enhances the quality of life for residents and promotes that natural beauty of our county. In 2012, travelers to the county spent \$191.6 million in our hotels, bed and breakfasts, stores, restaurants and of course our wineries. In Ontario County, there are more than 4,000 people employed in tourism with a total labor income of \$94.3 million. Jobs related to the wine industry include marketing, sales, farming, winemaking and tasting room staff, just to name a few. The Finger Lakes Visitor Connection really appreciates Senator O'Brien's ability to recognize this industry's value and stand behind tourism as a key contributor to the state's economy."

Barbara Risser, President of Finger Lakes Community College:

"We believe that the Finger Lakes wine industry is at a tipping point, poised for national recognition as the premier wine region in the Northeast. The mission of the Finger Lakes Community College viticulture and wine technology program is to educate the local workforce, helping to elevate the quality of wine from our region."

John Brahm, Owner of Arbor Hill Grapery and Winery:

"Arbor Hill Winery thanks Senator O'Brien's continued efforts on expanding and promoting the winery industry in New York State. It truly plays a critical role in the Finger Lakes Regional economy and must continue to receive this type of focus so small businesses can continue to thrive."

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Other attendees:

- Dr. Barbara Risser, President of Finger Lakes Community College
- John Brahm, Co-Owner of Arbor Hill Grapery and Winery

- Sherry Brahm, Buyer and Office Manager at Arbor Hill Grapery and Winery
- Tim Moore, Owner of Inspire Moore Winery
- Pam Raymor, President of Raymor Estate Cellars
- Herb Raymor, Winemaker of Raymor Estate Cellars
- Brad Phillips, Director of Marketing for Hazlitt 1852 Vineyards
- Christy Dann, CFO of Heron Hill
- Scott Osborn, President of Fox Run Vineyards
- Daniel Marshall, Supervisor of the Town of South Bristol
- John Cowley, Supervisor of the Town of Naples
- Mayor Brian Schenk of the Village of Naples
- AJ Shear, Communications Manager of the Finger Lakes Visitors Connection
- Cathy Fabretti, President of the Canandaigua Wine Trail and Director of Corporate Wine Sales at Casa Larga Vineyards
- Victor Nelson, Regional Membership Manager, New York State Hospitality and Tourism Association

Sen. O'Brien represents the 55th district in the Senate, which is made up of the eastern half of Monroe County and the western half of Ontario County, including much of the city of Rochester.

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