



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

## Senate approves creation of Dairy Farm Energy Assistance Fund ~ O'Mara co-sponsors bill to address key industry challenge

THOMAS F. O'MARA June 9, 2015

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**Albany, N.Y., June 9**—As New York State continues this month's celebration of Dairy Month, 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 new loan fund would be administered by the New York State Energy and Research Development Authority (NYSERDA) and provide state grants and low-interest loans to help dairy farmers undertake energy efficiency projects and purchase cutting-edge energy technologies. The legislation ([S.2984/A.1110](#)) must be approved by both houses of the Legislature and signed by Governor Andrew Cuomo before becoming law. It's currently in

the Assembly Economic Development Committee and is sponsored by Assemblyman Bill Magee (D-Nelson), who chairs the Assembly Agriculture Committee, and co-sponsored by Assemblyman Phil Palmesano (R,I,C-Corning).

“Energy is one of the most burdensome expenses on a dairy farm, and our dairy farmers are particularly hard hit by high fuel and other energy costs,” said O’Mara, a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee. “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.”

Last year, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, New York reclaimed its place as the **nation’s third-largest milk-producing state**. Over the past several years many New York farmers have struggled with 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 Additionally, many farmers have struggled with low milk prices, an outdated federal price control system and the escalating costs associated with running family farms.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 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.