



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Rich Funke

FUNKE & CHRISTMAS TREE GROWERS CELEBRATE THE SEASON BY PROMOTING LOCAL TREE FARMS

[RICH FUNKE](#) December 1, 2015

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In celebration of the busiest Christmas tree sales week of the year, Senator Rich Funke today announced new efforts to support local tree farms, including legislation to establish a statewide, Go Green Weekend for the tax-free sale of evergreen products. Funke was joined at the announcement by Faye Beckwith, President of the Christmas Tree Farmers Association of New York, and David Woodward, owner of Woody Acres in Penfield. Sales of New York grown Christmas trees declined 66% between 2002 and 2012, punctuating the need

for local farms to be afforded a level playing field when competing against artificial trees and out-of-state farms.

“Especially in the holiday season, the 26 Christmas tree farms operating across our District create local jobs, investment, and memories with family and friends that last a lifetime,” said Funke. “Go Green Weekend would level the playing field for farmers and consumers alike by creating a state-wide, tax-free holiday on the sale of fresh trees, wreaths, and garland each year. This legislation, combined with our support for an innovative new marketing campaign, would help make New York State our nation’s capital for fresh Christmas tree shopping.”

“For individuals and families across New York State, picking out the perfect Christmas tree at the start of the holiday season isn’t just fun—it’s a tradition,” said Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Senator Patty Ritchie. “From Balsam Fir to Blue Spruce, there’s no shortage of options when it comes to New York-grown Christmas trees. By establishing a ‘Go Green Weekend,’ we can encourage people to fill their homes with these fresh evergreen products and in turn, can help support the agribusiness owners who work so hard to grow them.”

Funke’s legislation, to be introduced as bill S.6232 in the 2016 Legislative Session, would establish a new statewide Go Green Weekend to be held annually starting the first Friday in December and ending the following Monday. During Go Green Weekend, New York State Sales Tax would be exempted on the purchase of all fresh-cut evergreen trees and evergreen products, like wreaths and garland. Municipalities and taxing jurisdictions would also have the option of waiving their local-share sales tax collections on these products under the

legislation as well.

Funke was also able to deliver \$125,000 in the 2015-16 State Budget to assist the Christmas Tree Farmers Association with new marketing objectives to promote locally-grown trees and evergreen products. Christmas trees grown in New York State are cut close to home, stay fresh longer, and require less transportation, reducing fuel consumption and emissions. The Christmas Tree Farmers Association is using the funding to explore and capitalize on new opportunities in the New York City market; launch new YouTube and other social media campaigns; update exhibits at the New York State Fair, Erie County Fair, and other farms and festivals; and run radio and television advertisements.

There are nearly 19,000 acres of Christmas trees growing on about 875 farms in New York State, ranking the state 4th in the US in number of Christmas tree farms. In 2012, about 275,000 trees were reported as harvested from the state's Christmas tree farms, making the industry an over \$8 million crop annually. Growers purchase equipment and fertilizers from local suppliers, pay farm workers, and invest earnings in local banks. This spending has a ripple effect in the community resulting in an estimated total economic impact of NYS Christmas tree farming of about \$14.7 million per year.

“On behalf of the state's Christmas tree farmers, I want to thank Senator Funke for his support of our industry,” said Beckwith. “We are pleased to be recognized for the important contributions that our farms make to New York's agricultural community and to the upstate rural economy.”

The 55th Senate District is home to more than 25 Christmas tree farms, including Woody Acres in Penfield. Established in 1915, Woody Acres is a fourth generation farm that has operated on the same homestead at 1530 Harris Rd for 100 years. Best known for its Christmas trees and pumpkins, Woody Acres also has a long tradition of commercial farming, including crops such as red kidney beans, hay, wheat, rye and field corn.

“We are delighted to host the Senator at our farm today and appreciate his efforts to help our business and the New York State Christmas tree industry,” said Woodward. “The Go Green Weekend Act will help Woody Acres by calling attention to locally-grown Christmas trees. Together with the Rochester area radio commercials and the new regional Hoppy Holidays promotion, made possible through the marketing funding in the Ag Budget, we look forward to seeing an increase in all on-farm sales and a greater awareness by the public of the value of farm-fresh trees and evergreen products for all New York Christmas tree farms.”

Upon the reconvention of State Legislature in January, S.6232 will be assigned to the Senate Committee on Investigations and Government Relations for further consideration.