



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara will continue as Chairman of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee in 2016 ~ Also named as a member on 9 other Senate committees including Agriculture, Energy, Finance and Transportation

THOMAS F. O'MARA January 7, 2016

| ISSUE: **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

| COMMITTEE: **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION**



Elmira, N.Y., January 7—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats), in his third term representing New York's 58th Senate District, has been reappointed chairman of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee.

The appointment was announced today at the Capitol by Senate Majority Leader John J. Flanagan. O'Mara has headed the Environmental Conservation Committee since early last year.

One of the Senate's key committee assignments, O'Mara said that he hopes to continue the committee's focus on numerous regional and statewide challenges including: soil and water conservation and quality; energy-related demands including the development and promotion of cleaner sources of energy; preservation initiatives impacting farmland, forests and other state resources; brownfields cleanup; solid and hazardous waste management; invasive and endangered species; and fish and wildlife conservation.

"These challenges and issues confronting New York are vital to the overall environmental and economic well-being of the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, and the state as a whole," said O'Mara, who has served as a member of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee since 2011. "I appreciate having the confidence of the Senate leadership to continue this challenging assignment and build on some of the important foundations we achieved last year."

O'Mara pointed to several achievements as highlights of his first year as chairman in 2015, including:

- the 2015-16 state budget including \$177 million for the **Environmental Protection Fund (EPF)**, a \$15-million increase. The EPF supports critical environmental and economic initiatives including clean air and water projects, flood control and restoration, and farmland preservation;

- the establishment in last year's budget of the **"Water Quality Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2015"** to help localities undertake water infrastructure improvement projects including

sewer and pipeline repairs. It's a program which O'Mara and Senate Republicans fought for as a priority. He hopes that it will serve as a model for transforming the state-local partnership to the benefit of local communities, local economies and local property taxpayers; and

-- extending the state's brownfields cleanup program for 10 years and refocusing it on the cleanup of polluted properties Upstate.

O'Mara said that he will remain committed to working with his legislative colleagues and the governor to strike a reasonable, sensible balance between environmental conservation and protection, and the need to spark and strengthen economic growth and private-sector job creation regionally and statewide. He said that environmental conservation- and protection-related issues have long been a focus of his service in the Legislature. His legislative district encompasses the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions where agriculture, including the hub of the state's wine-and-grape industry in the Finger Lakes, and tourism are economic foundations.

In 2014, O'Mara sponsored a new law (**S.7851-B/A.9619-B, Chapter 330**), together with Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton of Ithaca, requiring boaters to take reasonable precautions when launching their boats. It directs the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to develop rules and regulations for boaters to take precautions to prevent the spread of invasive species, such as removing all visible plants and animals from, or washing, draining and drying both motorized and non-motorized watercraft and related gear when entering and leaving a launch site. Some estimates have pegged the annual cost of invasive species to the national economy at \$120 billion a year.

In addition to his chairmanship of the Environmental Conservation Committee, O'Mara will serve as a member of the Senate Finance Committee and on the following eight Senate

committees: Agriculture; Banks; Codes; Energy; Insurance; Investigations and Government Operations; Judiciary; and Transportation.

O'Mara will also continue as one of 10 members on the Legislature's joint, bipartisan Commission on the Development of Rural Resources.

He stressed that all of his committee assignments will allow him to focus on many of the key issues still facing the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, including strengthening industries like agriculture, manufacturing and tourism, environmental conservation, public safety and criminal justice, and transportation challenges including local roads and bridges.

"It continues to be a full and enormously challenging plate of assignments. I'm grateful for the opportunities to hopefully provide some worthwhile input that moves us forward in positive directions and produces results. I'll do my best," O'Mara said. "These committees directly impact so many of the key challenges facing our localities, from the future of farming and manufacturing to tax relief and overall Upstate job creation. These assignments offer the chance for direct input on a range of policy areas critical to the short- and long-term future and strength of our local communities and economies."

The **58th Senate District** is comprised of Chemung, Schuyler, Steuben, and Yates counties, and a part of Tompkins County (the city and town of Ithaca, and the towns of Enfield, Newfield, and Ulysses).