



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

## O'Mara will continue to serve on Legislature's joint, bipartisan Rural Resources Commission

THOMAS F. O'MARA January 22, 2016

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**Elmira, N.Y., January 22**—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R-C, Big Flats) will continue to serve as one of four state senators on the joint, bipartisan Legislative Commission on Rural Resources.

O'Mara has served on the Commission since becoming a state senator in 2011.

“The simple fact is that the New York State Legislature is largely made up of downstate urban and suburban legislators. So the Rural Resources Commission offers a valuable platform for keeping at least some of the Legislature’s attention focused on our upstate, rural challenges in agriculture, broadband development, conservation, education, health care and jobs,” said O’Mara, whose 58th Senate District is comprised of Chemung, Schuyler, Steuben and Yates counties, and a portion of Tompkins County (the city and town of Ithaca, and the towns of Enfield, Newfield and Ulysses). “The commission has long been noted as a voice of rural New York. I’m proud to be part of the work we do on the needs of rural communities and economies here in the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, and statewide.”

New York Farm Bureau President Dean Norton said, "Senator O'Mara has been an advocate for agriculture and rural communities in the Senate, and is a fine representative on the Rural Resources Commission. New York Farm Bureau looks forward to continuing the relationship with him to highlight the needs and opportunities that exist in upstate New York and on Long Island."

O’Mara noted that area Assemblyman Phil Palmesano (R,C,I-Corning) and Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton (D-Ithaca) are also commission members, which is chaired by North Country New York State Senator Patty Ritchie (R,C-Watertown), who also chairs the Senate Agriculture Committee.

The commission, commonly known as the Rural Resources Commission, was established by the Legislature over three decades ago. It was created in 1982 to examine the impact of rural communities and industries on the state economy; review existing state laws and regulations impacting rural regions; assess the effectiveness of state programs and services affecting the needs and problems of rural areas; and develop recommendations for the Legislature to enhance and protect New York’s rural resources. It’s comprised of eight members – four

members of the Assembly, and four senators. Roughly 70% of New York's 62 counties are designated as rural, including all of the counties O'Mara represents. The Commission has worked on a range of issues including agriculture, economic development, universal broadband, education, land use, conservation, transportation, local government structure and functions, volunteer recruitment and retention, and health care.

"How these issues are addressed at the state level has an enormous impact on many local communities," O'Mara said. He noted that his legislative district encompasses Cornell University in Ithaca, which he praised for its leadership on rural issues through Cooperative Extension and many other Cornell-sponsored initiatives. Legislation developed by the Commission in 2008, which became law, made Cornell home to the nation's first legislatively established "Center for Rural Schools."

O'Mara said, "Cornell University has long played a leading role in rural affairs nationally and in New York. It makes sense for the Rural Resources Commission to further develop a working partnership with the university to promote a shared vision and common goals for rural New York's future. I'll be looking forward to opportunities to keep making this partnership as productive as possible."

The Commission periodically issues a publication called "Rural Futures" providing updates on rural New York legislation, news and other information. See the most recent edition of "Rural Futures" [HERE](#).