



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

RITCHIE UNVEILS “PLANTING SEEDS” INITIATIVE TO SUPPORT FARMERS AND GROW NY’S AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY

PATTY RITCHIE February 9, 2016

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Senator Patty Ritchie, Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, today unveiled her 2016 “*Planting Seeds*” legislative plan to continue supporting New York’s family farmers and boosting the agriculture economy.

Joined by members of the Senate Republican Conference, Senator Ritchie unveiled the plan, which includes proposals to restore budget cuts and increase funding for key agriculture programs in the areas of research, education and marketing, provide new tax and regulatory relief for farmers, support initiatives that promote food safety and create new opportunities for veterans in the agriculture industry, among others.

“New York farms—and New York farmers—are the backbone of our rural communities and economies,” said Senator Ritchie, “That’s why, once again, the Senate Majority Conference is making agriculture a top priority. We’re planting seeds to support the hard work of our farm families and grow the future of agriculture in New York State.”

“The success of agriculture is essential to the economic well-being of our rural communities. The Senate Majority’s plan focuses on critical areas including program funding, research, new farmer initiatives and agricultural education. They are all pieces of the puzzle that will assist in growing an industry that supports thousands of jobs and a healthy, safe food supply. New York Farm Bureau would like to thank the Senate Majority for their plan, and we look forward to working with the Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, Senator Patty Ritchie, and her colleagues to support farming in New York State,” said Dean Norton, New York Farm Bureau President.

"I am so pleased to learn of Senator Ritchie's initiative to help grow the agricultural community in New York. We are poised for incredible growth in farming and food production if we can simply take advantage of the sometimes insurmountable opportunities that exist today. By providing support for the critical partnership between New York State

and the Land Grant mission at Cornell's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, the Senate is showing incredible leadership for the research based knowledge that gives New York's farm families an economic advantage in today's marketplace," said Julie Suarez, Assistant Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University.

In addition, *Planting Seeds* also proposes new programs to grow agriculture in the region Senator Ritchie represents. Under the plan, a new "North Country Ag Academy" would be created. Modeled after a similar program in Western New York, the Ag Academy would provide hands-on learning experiences for aspiring young farmers to learn and practice the agricultural arts, and prepare them for future careers.

Planting Seeds also proposes the creation of an agriculture management program at SUNY Canton, which for many students could serve as a lower-cost alternative to a traditional four-year agriculture degree program. Originally founded as the School of Agriculture at St. Lawrence, the college eliminated most agriculture-related degrees in the 1990s. The Senate's plan would support the provision of staff to provide courses and real work experience allowing students to study marketing, technology, and other practical skills necessary to survive and thrive in the farming industry.

Planting Seeds builds upon key elements of the Senate Republicans' successful Young Farmers and Grown in New York programs that have been enacted over the last five years. In addition to reductions in broad based tax rates and a statewide property tax cap that is reining in school and municipal taxes, a Senate Republican initiative to limit increases in agricultural land assessments has already saved farmers more than \$11 million in its very first year. Other measures have reduced the estate tax to help preserve the tradition of family farming, connected young farmers with grants to help them start a new business, and reduced educational costs for those interested in beginning a farming career.

For full details on Planting Seeds, [click here](#).