



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## ROPS: A VITAL TOOL TO IMPROVE TRACTOR SAFETY

PATTY RITCHIE February 16, 2016



When you think of dangerous jobs, farming probably doesn't immediately come to mind. However, with the fatality rate 700 percent higher than all American workers, many of our hardworking farmers face significant threats to their safety. The leading cause of death on a farm? Tractor rollover incidents.

Every year, 96 farmers across the country are victims of tractor rollovers; with farmers here in the Northeast experiencing the highest rates of overturn deaths. And, it's not just something that's happening to inexperienced farmers—it's estimated that 80 percent of

deaths caused by rollovers happen to those who have been in the business for a very long time. If a farmer does survive a rollover, the odds that they'll be able to work again are slim, with one out of every seven farmers involved in a tractor overturn becoming permanently disabled.

As Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I know how important it is to not only support the important work of our hardworking farmers, but also to keep them safe while on the job. That's why in recent years, I've advocated for funding for the Rollover Protective Structure (ROPS) Rebate Program, which helps equip tractors with an important piece of safety equipment that helps reduce the risk of injury in the event of a tractor overturn.

While most tractors built after 1985 have built-in rollover protection, tractors manufactured prior to that date—which many of our farmers use—do not have the safety feature in place. The ROPS Rebate Program helps protect farmers by covering 70 percent of the cost of purchasing and installing ROPS, up to a maximum out of pocket cost of \$500. If a farmer's out of pocket expense is greater than \$500, the New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health, which oversees the program, will increase the rebate to ensure the cost is capped at \$500.

Last year, I fought for \$250,000 in the 2015-2016 state budget to protect New York farmers through the ROPS program, which in the event of a rollover can reduce the risk of injury by up to 99 percent. In the past five years, I've advocated for \$700,000 in restored cuts to the ROPS program, which has helped more than 1,300 New York farmers including 79 in Oswego, Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties. Once again this year, I'll be fighting alongside my colleagues to make sure this vitally important program receives the funding it needs to keep our farmers safe from injury while working.

While winter is still in full swing across Central and Northern New York, many farmers are getting ready for the upcoming growing season. If you're a farmer looking to increase safety on your farm by taking advantage of New York's ROPS Rebate Program, I urge you to call the ROPS Rebate Hotline at 1-877-ROPS-R4U or visit [www.ropsr4u.com](http://www.ropsr4u.com).