



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara named recipient of 2016 'Library Champion Award' ~ New Yorkers for Better Libraries praise O'Mara's leadership and commitment

THOMAS F. O'MARA September 27, 2016

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Elmira, N.Y., September 27—New Yorkers for Public Libraries, a prominent library advocacy organization, has named State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) a recipient of the group's 2016 "Library Champion Award."

O'Mara was one of only seven members of the New York State Senate to receive the award this year.

John Hammond, Chair of the New Yorkers for Better Libraries Steering Committee, said, "These lawmakers have shown exceptional leadership and commitment to New York's libraries and I am proud to present the Library Champion Award to each of these deserving recipients. These legislators provided the leadership and resolve libraries desperately need in Albany. Each honoree understands that libraries are a critical part of New York's educational infrastructure and has worked hard to ensure that libraries receive the funding they need to provide lifelong learning opportunities for every New Yorker. As an organization we are grateful to each of these members of the Legislature and look forward to continuing our work together helping move New York forward for libraries and the communities they serve."

O'Mara said, "This recognition of my commitment to our public libraries is especially meaningful, and I truly appreciate the organization's confidence in my support. Fighting for our public libraries is an investment in education, economic growth and civic quality for parents and families, seniors and the community at large. Our libraries play a fundamental role in local workforce development, career training and job placement. They are cherished public institutions, and the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions are incredibly fortunate to have an outstanding network of public libraries providing access to books and so many other activities, learning materials, and civic, cultural and economic opportunities. I'm proud to support their ongoing success."

O'Mara noted that public libraries across New York State serve over 19 million patrons annually.

Throughout his tenure in the Legislature, O'Mara has been a strong supporter of Southern Tier and Finger Lakes public libraries, recognizing their central importance to the civic, cultural and educational fabric of area communities. He has fought for increased state support for the Library Construction Grant Program. The 2016-17 state budget increased funding for the program by \$5 million to \$19 million, as well including \$95.6 million in state aid to public libraries, a \$4-million increase. It's important progress representing the highest aid level since 2008, according to the New York Library Association.

In 2015, O'Mara and Palmesano, who also received the "Library Champion Award" this year, sponsored a new law (**Chapter 480 of the Laws of 2015**) to, for the first time, include "installation and infrastructure of broadband services" as a specific project category eligible to receive funding through the Library Construction Grant Program. Prior to the law's enactment, libraries were unable to access funding through the popular grant program specifically for broadband purposes including cable, wiring and modems, and network terminals and access points.

Visit the website of the Southern Tier Library System, www.stls.org, for links to member libraries in Chemung, Schuyler, Steuben and Yates. The members of the Finger Lakes Library System, including Tompkins County, can be found online at www.flls.org.