



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Southern Tier Senators O'Mara and Akshar volunteer at the Food Bank of the Southern Tier on Thursday in support of the 'Farm to Food Bank' legislation they co-sponsor

THOMAS F. O'MARA November 3, 2016

| ISSUE: **FOOD BANKS**



I'm proud to co-sponsor, strongly support and urge Governor Cuomo to sign into law this commonsense "Farm to Food Bank" legislation to support food banks and farmers, and combat hunger.

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**Elmira, N.Y., November 3**—New York State Senators Tom O’Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) and **Fred Akshar (R,C,IP-Binghamton)** visited the **Food Bank of the Southern Tier** this morning to urge Governor Andrew Cuomo to sign into law legislation they co-sponsor to provide a tax credit of up to \$5,000 to farmers who donate fresh produce to food banks and other emergency food providers.

Commonly known as the “Farm to Food Bank” legislation (**S7833/A10854**), the measure was unanimously approved by the Senate and Assembly in June and will soon be delivered to the governor for final action. Cuomo vetoed the legislation last year, but after addressing the administration’s concerns, sponsors of the legislation, including O’Mara and Akshar, and anti-hunger organizations throughout New York are hopeful that the legislation will become law this year.

To raise awareness of the legislation’s importance, O’Mara and Akshar participated in a volunteer repack activity where they packed New York State produce to be distributed to people in need through the Food Bank’s 167 member agencies. They also toured the Food Bank warehouse with Food Bank staff and representatives from member food pantries throughout the Southern Tier.

In the Southern Tier, 72,650 people live below the poverty line, including one in four children. For many people living in poverty, fresh fruits and vegetables are difficult to afford.

“This bill would have a significant impact on the amount of fresh, healthy food that we can distribute,” said Natasha Thompson, President & CEO of the Food Bank. “We’re grateful that we have elected officials who champion common-sense legislation that supports people struggling with hunger.”

O'Mara said, "I'm proud to co-sponsor, strongly support and urge Governor Cuomo to sign into law this commonsense 'Farm to Food Bank' legislation to support food banks and farmers, and combat hunger. It will enhance and strengthen the ability of the Food Bank of the Southern Tier and their counterparts statewide to access nutritious, fresh, high quality, locally produced food. Our farmers are already extremely supportive of our food banks, and this tax credit provides a worthwhile incentive for farmers to donate even more. And, most importantly, it will help provide this healthy food for more and more children and families in need. It would be a meaningful addition to the goal of hunger-free communities and we are grateful to everyone at the Food Bank of the Southern Tier for their leadership in achieving this goal."

The Farm to Food Bank law would fill a critical need by increasing the amount of produce available to people struggling with hunger. At the same time, it would support local agriculture and reduce food waste by re-distributing food that might otherwise go uneaten.

Last year, the Food Bank distributed more than 10 million pounds of food, including 1.5 million pounds of fresh produce, throughout six counties in the Southern Tier. Still, the Food Bank would need to distribute an additional 4.7 million meals to feed everyone who is hungry. The Farm to Food Bank bill would allow the Food Bank to distribute more healthy food to those in need.

To learn more about the Food Bank's advocacy efforts, visit [www.FoodBankST.org](http://www.FoodBankST.org) or call (607) 796-6061.

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ABOUT THE FOOD BANK OF THE SOUTHERN TIER

Established in 1981 and headquartered in Elmira, NY, the Food Bank of the Southern Tier distributes food and other grocery products to people in need through a network of more than 160 member agencies including food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, and other hunger relief organizations in Broome, Chemung, Schuyler, Steuben, Tioga, and Tompkins counties. The Food Bank also administers several direct service food distribution programs including the Backpack Program and Mobile Food Pantry. The Food Bank is a member of Feeding America and a regional agency of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Rochester. The Food Bank's mission is to work together to build and sustain hunger free communities throughout the Southern Tier.