



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara welcomes Cuomo proposals to expand number of hemp farms allowed to operate in New York State ~ O'Mara and Southern Tier Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo have worked to jump-start the hemp manufacturing industry in NY since 2014

THOMAS F. O'MARA January 11, 2017

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**Elmira, N.Y., January 11**—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats), who has sponsored new laws over the past two years seeking to secure an economic foothold for New York's farmers in the nation's burgeoning industrial hemp industry, today welcomed a proposal by Governor Andrew Cuomo to lift the current cap on the number of state farms which can receive licenses to grow and manufacture hemp.

Since 2014, O'Mara has worked closely with Southern Tier Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo (D-Endwell) to sponsor and secure the enactment of laws that have jump-started the industry's growth in New York.

O'Mara, a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, said, "These new laws have significantly strengthened the foundation Assemblywoman Lupardo and I have been building over the past few years to place New York State at the forefront of a new industry with the potential to diversify our agricultural economy, generate revenue and create jobs. We're moving forward to ensure that the development and growth of the industrial hemp industry will provide valuable new economic opportunities and a competitive edge for Southern Tier and Finger Lakes farmers and agribusinesses, together with the state's agricultural industry overall. Governor Cuomo's proposal to help expand the number of farms allowed to grow and manufacture hemp is a continued step in the right direction."

Current law caps at 10 the number of farms allowed to grow and manufacture hemp. **In a State of the State speech in Syracuse today, the governor proposed eliminating the cap and other regulatory actions to encourage the industry's expansion.** Cuomo also said that the Southern Tier will be the site of the state's first-ever "Industrial Hemp Summit" later this year.

O'Mara applauded the governor's proposals.

New York State's industrial hemp industry took a significant step forward in 2016 when Cuomo signed into law legislation sponsored by O'Mara and Lupardo to continue positioning New York as a national leader within the developing industry.

Last June, both houses of the Legislature approved the new law (**S6960/A9310, Chapter 256 of the Laws of 2016**) that allows for the transportation, processing, sale, and distribution of hemp grown as part of the New York's research pilot program. It also authorizes universities, including Cornell University, and partner farmers to study and establish business and economic opportunities that will lay the groundwork for a fully-fledged agricultural industry once the crop is fully legalized by the federal government.

O'Mara and Lupardo have noted that the New York Farm Bureau, Cornell University researchers and other agricultural leaders and farm advocates recognize industrial hemp as a potentially lucrative way to provide new economic opportunities and a competitive edge for state farmers. Cuomo said today that the hemp manufacturing could become a \$1 billion industry in New York.

Research of industrial hemp by states was permitted as part of the 2014 US Farm Bill (§7606). **New York's pilot program was established following the enactment of legislation sponsored by Lupardo and O'Mara later that year.** In early 2016, regulations for the program were finalized and the first licenses were issued.

Both the stalk and seed from hemp can be used in the production of a variety of goods including textiles, building materials, paper, food and environmental products such as biofuels. It is a source of cannabidiol, a chemical compound used in medical marijuana applications, and is also rich in Omega 3 and Omega 6 fatty acids, which gives it numerous health benefits to both humans and animals. According to a 2015 report, retail sales from imported hemp products were estimated at \$600 million in the United States.