



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Rich Funke

Funke's Farm to Food Bank Bill Again Passes Senate, Defying Gov's Frivolous Vetoes

RICH FUNKE January 31, 2017

| ISSUE: **FARMING, TAX CREDITS, FOOD BANKS**



The New York State Senate yesterday passed [S1606](#), a bill sponsored by Senator **Rich Funke** that would help move more fresh food from farms to those in need. Known as the Farm to Food Bank program, the legislation would create a modest tax credit for donations made to food banks or other emergency food programs by New York State farmers. The bill has passed both the Senate and the Assembly with bipartisan support in the past, but has twice been vetoed by New York State Governor **Andrew M. Cuomo** without merit. To expedite the program's passage, **Funke** will be advocating for the proposal to be included in the 2017-18

State Budget.

“Our Farm to Food Bank program is a win-win for local farmers and at-risk families, yet the Governor has twice vetoed this common-sense solution to help feed our hungry,” said **Funke**. *“I pushed to get this bill passed early so we still have time to get Farm to Food Bank in the state budget, where it belongs. Any budget is a statement of priorities. If the Governor believes there’s room in the budget for big policies that have nothing to do with dollars and cents, there’s room for a small way to help farmers cover the cost of moving food to those in need.”*

New York farmers have historically been very generous in donating food to those in need. According to the New York State Farm Bureau, New York farmers donated nearly ten million pounds of food in 2014 alone. However, farmers often face barriers to getting excess produce into the emergency food system, including added labor, packaging, and transportation costs that are not offset by corresponding sale proceeds. Farmers who make emergency food donations are currently eligible for a federal tax credit, but this credit cannot be used by sole proprietors or farmers operating on a cash basis, which account for the majority of farms in New York State.

The new state legislation would allow an eligible farmer to claim a modest credit of 25% percent of the wholesale cost of qualified donations, up to \$5,000 per year.

“Yesterday the New York State Senate once again passed the Farm to Food Bank bill. We applaud Senator Funke for his steadfast commitment and leadership on this important issue,” said **Susan Zimet**, Executive Director of Hunger Action Network of NYS. *“Providing nutritious fruits and vegetables*

to those facing adversity gives them a fighting chance at maintaining their health, especially for children and seniors. It is unconscionable that the State gives tax credits to so many sectors but not to our hardworking farmers -- who are already struggling to keep their farms under the intense property tax burden in New York."

The legislation has received broad support from advocates across the state, including: the New York State Farm Bureau, New York State League of Conservation Voters, Hunger Action Network of New York, Foodlink, the National Resources Defense Council, Food & Water Watch, the Regional Foodbank of Northeastern New York, The Bed-Stuy Campaign Against Hunger, and the Bronx Jewish Community Council, among many others.

The legislation has been sent to the Assembly.

VIDEO: <https://youtu.be/PctWbs9lwZA>