



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

## O'Mara co-sponsoring legislation to encourage food industry donations: Calls for tax credit to grocers, others donating surplus food

THOMAS F. O'MARA June 9, 2017

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**Elmira, N.Y., June 9**—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) today announced that he is co-sponsoring legislation to incentivize New York's food industry to cut down on food waste by donating their surpluses to local food banks and pantries.

Food waste makes up the single largest material found in landfills and sent to waste incinerators in the United States.

“We need to keep taking commonsense actions like this one to stop perfectly good, fresh, nutritious food from ending up in landfills and waste incinerators and, at the same time, to help end hunger,” said O’Mara, Chairman of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee and a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee.

Earlier this year he joined other legislators and anti-hunger advocates, including the Food Bank of the Southern Tier, to help secure the enactment in this year’s state budget of 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” tax credit.**

He said that the latest proposal would continue to build on this year’s action.

Specifically, the legislation (**S.6083A/A.8138**) would establish a tax credit of up to \$5,000 for grocery stores, food brokers, wholesalers, restauranteurs, or catering services that donate surplus or about-to-waste food to local food banks and pantries.

The United States Department of Agriculture estimates that between thirty and forty percent of the nation’s food supply goes to waste. In 2016, The Guardian newspaper reported that over 60 million tons of food, worth over \$100 billion, go to waste in the United States every year. Additionally, the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports that food waste currently accounts for nearly a quarter of methane emissions from the nation’s landfills.

Wegmans Chairman Danny Wegman said, “There’s an abundance of food in our country, yet every community is faced with people who are food insecure. We feel strongly about doing our part to reduce hunger, and for us that means donating excess food whenever possible.

Each of our stores has local food pantries picking up perishable food donations each week. We encourage others to look for ways to start or improve their donation practices, because when we all work together, our communities thrive.”

O'Mara **recently helped celebrate The Food Bank of the Southern Tier's designation as “Food Bank of the Year” by Feeding America**, the nation's largest domestic hunger-relief organization.

The Food Bank of the Southern Tier serves seven regional counties -- Broome, Chemung, Schuyler, Steuben, Tioga and Tompkins – covering nearly 4,000 square miles. In 2016 the organization distributed more than 11.5 million pounds of food and grocery items through approximately 160 partner agencies, including food pantries, meal programs, shelters, and after-school and senior programs.