



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

## New law establishes 'Rural Health Council': O'Mara says action will ensure rural voice in state-level health care decisions

THOMAS F. O'MARA December 5, 2017

| ISSUE: [RURAL NEW YORK](#)



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**Elmira, N.Y., December 5**—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) today said that legislation he supported in the Senate this year to reestablish a “Rural Health Council” within the state Department of Health has been signed into law.

“Health care is one of the most complex, difficult, and far-reaching challenges facing patients, providers, and decision makers in New York’s rural regions. This new law will help ensure that rural New Yorkers have a strong and active voice at the table in Albany when state bureaucrats are making decisions on programs and policies that impact the overall well-being of rural communities.”

The new law (**S4741/A7203, Chapter 419 of the Laws of 2017**) will reestablish and make the council permanent. The council formed in 1988 but has largely not functioned in recent years. Among other provisions, the membership of the newly designated, 21-member council will be composed of strictly rural representatives appointed by Senate and Assembly leaders, and Governor Andrew Cuomo.

O’Mara said the overriding goal is to have the council provide a firsthand perspective, guidance, and expertise on rural health challenges and issues. The newly designated council will advise the state Department of Health on all aspects of rural health care, hold at least two statewide public hearings annually, and be required to submit a yearly report to the state’s 10 Regional Economic Development Councils (REDCs) on the status of the health care workforce in rural areas statewide.