



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara, colleagues unveil 'Growing Strong' plan to strengthen New York agriculture: Comprehensive strategy includes investments, tax and regulatory reforms

THOMAS F. O'MARA March 7, 2018

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“Growing Strong” proposes a series of investments, educational strategies, and tax and regulatory reforms, to strengthen New York State’s nationally leading agricultural industry.

Albany, N.Y., March 7—State Senator Tom O’Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) and his colleagues in the Senate Majority Conference today unveiled a “Growing Strong” plan that proposes a series of investments, educational strategies, and tax and regulatory reforms, to strengthen New York

State's nationally leading agricultural industry.

"We need to keep taking actions that can help keep our next generation of farmers competitive for the long haul. We cannot risk New York State's farmers being taxed, regulated and priced out of business. The 'Growing Strong' plan is a comprehensive, common sense blueprint to keep New York a proud and strong agricultural state," said O'Mara, a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee. "Farming has been a mainstay of upstate New York's culture and economy for centuries, and it remains the backbone of many of our communities. But the challenges and the competition are tougher than ever."

A cornerstone of the Senate's "Growing Strong" plan is action O'Mara strongly supports to restore approximately \$13 million in funding cuts being sought by Governor Andrew Cuomo in the 2018-19 state budget currently being negotiated. Since 2011, Senate Republicans have led the fight to restore more than \$50 million in budget cuts proposed by Cuomo, increase funding for many programs and services, and spearhead new initiatives.

In addition to the funding restorations, O'Mara said that the "Growing Strong" plan he co-sponsors calls for, among numerous other provisions:

- > undertaking a comprehensive review of state rules and regulations to weed out existing regulations that unnecessarily increase costs on farms and stand as obstacles to profitability for farmers and agribusinesses;
- > creating a one-stop hotline for farmers seeking information on available state funding and resources to grow their businesses;
- repeal the Highway Use Tax for farm-registered trucks;
- > provide a tax credit for dairy farmers to encourage investment in facilities and equipment that will allow them to take advantage of a growing demand for "value-added" dairy

products, like flavored drinks, yogurts, and other products;

> provide a tax credit for companies that purchase New York-grown crops and use these crops in their value-added products. Eligible crops include various fruits, vegetables, and field crops including, among others, wheat, barley, and hops;

> create a “Lifeline Dairy Energy Assistance Program” for dairy farmers struggling with a prolonged slump in milk prices. The program would direct \$10 million in existing NYSERDA funds to install high efficiency lighting, pumping and cooling equipment, and to promote investment in energy-producing biomass generators and digesters;

expand agricultural P-Tech education programs that help prepare students for increasing technology demands of farming careers, restore funding for Beginning Farmer Grants that the governor proposes to cut, and increase support to establish new chapters of school-based FFA programs in response to growing interest in agriculture.

[View a copy of the full "Growing Strong" plan attached above]