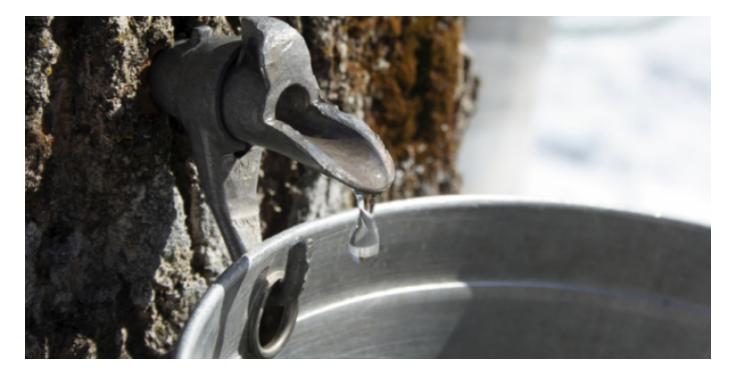## "Tapping" into a Sweet Tradition

SENATOR PATTY RITCHIE   March 9, 2018

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Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

Found in some 30 different local products, maple syrup is not just for pancakes anymore. There is maple candy, maple popcorn, maple jelly and even maple pepper. If those—and of course maple syrup—sound like "sweet" treats you might want to try, I highly encourage you to find a nearby sugarhouse taking part in upcoming "Maple Weekend" events.

Held on March 17th and 18th, and then again on March 24th and 25th, there are 177 farms across New York State, including dozens here in our region, set to open up their sugarhouses to show people just how real maple syrup is made, and of course offer some tasty samples.

Here in New York State, maple is more than just something sweet. It's an important, growing part of our agriculture economy. In fact, New York is second in the nation—just behind Vermont—when it comes to maple syrup production. With the largest number of tappable trees in the United States, there is great potential for us to become number one.

As Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I have been working in recent years to support the growth of New York's maple industry in a number of ways, including by securing funds for important research. I will also be advocating for a new piece of legislation (S7842) called "Maple One", which has the ambitious goal of overtaking Vermont as America's leading maple producer by issuing permits to allow farmers to tap maple trees on certain state-owned lands.

The upcoming "Maple Weekend" events are the perfect way for people to not only sample everything maple syrup, but also to help support those who help put it on our tables. I hope you'll take part in this sweet tradition.

For more information, on "Maple Weekend", including a list of the participating sugarhouses nearest to you, visit the New York State Maple Association website at www.nysmaple.com.