



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senate approves legislation O'Mara co-sponsors to encourage donations from food industry: Calls for tax credit to grocers, others donating surplus food to food banks

THOMAS F. O'MARA April 30, 2018

| ISSUE: **HUNGER PREVENTION**



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Albany, N.Y., April 30—The State Senate today approved legislation co-sponsored by Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) 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 combat hunger,” said O’Mara, Chair of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee and a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee.

In 2017, O’Mara joined other legislators and anti-hunger advocates, including the Food Bank of the Southern Tier, to help secure the enactment in the 2017-2018 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 to help offset the cost of picking, packaging, and delivering the fresh produce to food banks and pantries.

In early December, the New York Farm Bureau announced that state farmers donated more than nine million pounds of fresh food and farm products in 2017, an amount which equals more than seven million meals to those in need. Farm and food advocates expect donations to increase in 2018 because of the new Farm to Food Bank tax credit.

O’Mara said that the latest legislative proposal he co-sponsors would build on last 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, restaurateurs, 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.

Also in 2017, O'Mara 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.