



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Todd Kaminsky

Sen. Kaminsky and Assemb. Englebright Announce Passage of Food Waste Diversion Program in State Budget

TODD KAMINSKY April 18, 2019

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(Uniondale, New York) — Today, Senator Todd Kaminsky, Assemblyman Steve Englebright, the owner of Long Island's first anaerobic digester, and officials from Long Island Cares and Island Harvest, announced the passage of a measure to divert food waste from landfills, and instead use it to feed the hungry and sustain the environment. Kaminsky and Englebright, who serve as Chair of the Senate and Assembly Environmental Conservation Committees,

respectively, successfully pushed for the inclusion of the measure in this year's state budget. (Video of event here.)

"It is crucial for us to do all we can to protect our planet and ensure our neighbors do not go hungry," said Senator Todd Kaminsky, Chair of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee. "Instead of dumping unused food at landfills and accumulating harmful greenhouse gasses, we can divert these precious resources to those in need and curb waste. I was proud to have led the fight to include this commonsense measure in this year's state budget, and look forward to seeing it pay dividends across our State."

Senator Anna M. Kaplan said "Each year, we send hundreds of thousands of tons of wasted food to landfills, while too many Long Islanders go hungry due to food insecurity. By diverting this surplus and scrap food from landfills to food banks and organics recyclers, we can help feed our neighbors in need, keep harmful greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere, generate electricity, and produce rich organic fertilizers, all while sending less material to our landfills, and saving taxpayers money."

Senator Jim Gaughran said "Ensuring that New Yorkers reduce food waste by creating a culture in which food scraps are used as an energy source or donated to those in need, will substantially reduce food waste in landfills and reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that stem from landfill dumping. This measure will help our environment while simultaneously help feed people in need and create energy. I was proud to support this bill and I look forward to continue finding innovative ways for New Yorkers to protect our environment and reduce the 3.9 million tons of food waste our state produces annually."

"The legislation announced today by Senator Kaminsky is a win-win for all New Yorkers in protecting the environment and providing critical food support for nearly 2.8 million people across the state, including 300,000 Long Islanders, who struggle with food insecurity every

day,” said Randi Shubin Dresner, president & CEO, Island Harvest Food Bank. “We are grateful for the leadership and effort that Senator Kaminsky and Assemblyman Englebright have provided in putting forth this new law that addresses two critical issues deeply rooted within Island Harvest Food Bank’s core mission to end hunger and reduce food waste on Long Island.”

"The passage of the Food Waste Diversion Program is a step forward in combating food insecurity in New York. If we can do our part by simultaneously decreasing hunger and protecting the environment, then that is a big win. I am proud that this measure will ensure that edible food will go to people in need and that inedible food will be properly composted," said Assemblywoman Judy Griffin, Member of the New York State Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee.

Energy Vision President Matt Tomich said “By ensuring that edible food is redistributed and food scraps are diverted from landfills, where they would otherwise decompose and emit methane, the Food Waste Diversion Program aligns New York State with the international goal to halve food waste by 2030. This important legislation will also drive investment in state-of-the-art anaerobic digestion technology to transform inedible food into a valuable source of nutrient rich compost and renewable energy, advancing New York's ambitious climate and clean energy goals.”

“The Rock and Wrap It Up! collaboration with Senator Todd Kaminsky addresses the growing problem of food waste in NYS through the passage of the NYS Budget is a fantastic solution. The passing assures the further reduction of both poverty and carbon footprints by getting healthy food safely to our at-risk population,” said Syd Mandelbaum, CEO and Founder of Rock and Wrap It Up!, an award-winning anti-poverty think tank.

"Wasting wholesome food is a senseless missed opportunity to help those in need and to protect our environment. This new program has meaningful society benefits including feeding the hungry, reducing our solid waste stream and fighting climate change. On Long Island, we need to dramatically reduce our solid waste stream as we near the anticipated closure of the Brookhaven landfill in 2025. Redirecting excess food is a substantial step in achieving the needed reduction. Kudos to Senator Kaminsky and Assemblyman Englebright for championing this important program," said Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment.

"Food waste makes up almost 20% of the solid waste stream in New York and is a major contributor to climate change. At the same time, many New Yorkers struggle to put food on the table. That's why NYLCV has made food waste reduction a long-time priority in our advocacy work. We are thrilled that thanks to Senator Kaminsky's leadership, this year's budget includes legislation requiring excess wholesome food to be donated and food waste to be diverted to an organics processing facility. We thank Senator Kaminsky for fighting for this important legislation," said Patrick McClellan, State Policy Director for the New York League of Conservation Voters.

Long Island Cares Chief Government Affairs Officer Michael W. Haynes said "Starting 2 years ago with the inclusion of the Farm to Food Bank Tax Credit in New York's State Budget, Governor Cuomo and the State Legislature established fighting food waste as a key legislative priority for the Empire State. The tradition continued last month when Senator Kaminsky's proposal to divert discarded, inedible food to processing facilities that produce clean energy was included in the State Budget. Senator Kaminsky's "Food Donation and Food Scraps Recycling Bill" also contained provisions on how to rescue wholesome food and ensure it goes to New Yorkers in need.

“The myriad connections between access to nutrition and public health are well documented. However, the role of the food system and its complex interaction with our environment is an area that warrants further investigation and one where it is imperative we, as a State and Nation, do better. When you consider that New Yorkers waste approximately 3.9 million tons of food scraps each year at the same time as food banks, such as Long Island Cares, Inc.—The Harry Chapin Food Bank, are trying to support 2.5 million New Yorkers who do not know where their next meal is coming from, this common sense legislation designed to reduce waste, feed hungry New Yorkers, and produce clean energy (and clean energy jobs) is a win-win-win. We commend Senator Kaminsky and his colleagues in both the State Assembly and Senate, as well as Governor Cuomo, for including this forward thinking legislation in the budget.”

Each year, New Yorkers produce more than 3.9 million tons of food scraps from restaurants, grocery stores and other facilities. The vast majority of these food scraps are dumped into our landfills, where they break down and release methane — a greenhouse gas with 86 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide. Edible food can be donated to those in need, while inedible food can be used to produce a fuel that can significantly reduce carbon emissions in New York.

The measure Senator Kaminsky successfully pushed for will require supermarkets, restaurants and other large generators of excess food to donate their leftovers and send inedible food to a processing facility to be turned into fuel, made from the methane gases the decomposing wastes emit. By capturing these gases — instead of allowing them to escape into the atmosphere — and by using the fuel to generate power, heat homes or fuel vehicles, New York’s ambitious carbon reduction goals can be advanced.