



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara targets labor shortage holding back resurgence of local economies: Co-sponsoring new legislation requiring NYS to drop supplemental \$300-per-week unemployment benefits

THOMAS F. O'MARA May 21, 2021

| ISSUE: **EMPLOYEES IN THE WORKFORCE**



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Elmira, N.Y., May 21—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) is co-sponsoring new legislation aimed at addressing the severe labor shortage that many business owners across

the region say is curtailing a full economic recovery from the COVID-19 shutdown.

O'Mara joined Senate Republican colleague Senator George Borrello (R,C,I-Jamestown), who sponsors the measure, and regional business owners/operators from the manufacturing and restaurant/hospitality sectors in Western New York to introduce the legislation and speak about the shortage that they say is hurting employers regionally and statewide from meeting the surging demand for goods and services as New York starts to turn the corner on the pandemic. The employers shared the hiring difficulties they've encountered and the lengths to which they've gone to attract and retain employees.

The lawmakers point to the federal government's supplemental unemployment benefits program as a major culprit for the shortage.

The legislation (S6788) they are sponsoring would withdraw New York State from the enhanced benefit portion of the program, which provides claimants with an extra \$300 per week in addition to the standard state benefit.

O'Mara said, "The COVID-19 economic shutdown has taken an enormous toll on Upstate New York's local communities, economies, taxpayers, and workers. There was never a more critical time to ensure that unemployment insurance benefits were available to struggling families and we worked tirelessly to ensure that these benefits were available and adequate to help keep workers afloat. But the unemployment system was never intended to be a long-term replacement for a good job. Now that we are finding solid ground again and local economies are ready and able to fully reopen, it is time to rebuild and reenergize the workforce that will truly bring our regional economy back strong."

Borrello said, "After the challenges and losses of the past year, small businesses have been anxiously awaiting the day when they could move beyond the pandemic and resume

full operations. What they didn't anticipate was the magnitude of the labor shortage they would face and that their competition would come, not from other employers, but from enhanced unemployment benefit checks."

If enacted, the legislation would withdraw New York from the enhanced benefit portion of the federal pandemic unemployment compensation program. Withdrawal from the program would return benefits to their pre-pandemic state rate, which is dependent on income, but averages about \$350 per week, with the maximum benefit capped at \$504 per week.

The move would bring New York in line with nearly two dozen other states that are dropping the benefit.