



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George M. Borrello

Senator Borrello Leads Hostile Amendment to Repeal Provision Establishing Farm Laborer Wage Board

GEORGE M. BORRELLO March 10, 2022

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ALBANY – With New York’s agriculture industry facing more hardships from a Farm Laborer Wage Board recommendation that will raise overtime costs, Sen. George Borrello proposed a hostile amendment on the senate floor Wednesday to eliminate the wage board and keep the farm labor overtime threshold at the 60-hour level.

“The farmers I’ve spoken with in my district are dedicated to their work, but are finding it harder to stay afloat financially due to a combination of market changes and burdensome policies coming from Albany,” Sen. Borrello said. “With our agriculture industry poised for more pain because the unelected members of the Farm Laborer Wage Board recommended lowering the overtime threshold, I led a hostile amendment on the senate floor that would eliminate this board and its ability to further harm this vital industry.

“Unfortunately, it was rejected by senate Democrats who continue to prioritize a radical special interest agenda, even when it is counterproductive to those they claim they want to help.”

On Jan. 28, the Wage Board recommended lowering the overtime threshold from 60 hours per week to 40 hours per week despite warnings from farmers and agriculture producers that the resulting hike in labor costs will decimate agriculture in New York.

“This is an agenda-driven measure by New York City legislators who don’t understand farm operations or the desire of farm workers to maximize their working hours during peak season so they can send money home to their families,” Sen. Borrello said. “The Wage Board ignored the testimony of farmers, farm workers and a report from Cornell University warning that lowering the overtime threshold will result in less hours and money for farm laborers and threaten the future of farming in New York.

“I will continue to call out policies that threaten this industry, which is the backbone of our state’s economy. We have over 30,000 farms in New York and 98 percent of them are family owned. I will always fight to protect them.”

During session Wednesday, the Senate passed a series of bills Sen. Borrello co-sponsored to support farmers including:

- **The Locally Sourced Goods for Schools Bill** (S.3974), sponsored by Sen. Tim Kennedy, to make it easier for school districts to buy local farm products for school lunches;
- **The Young Farmers Loan Forgiveness Act** (S.4082), sponsored by Sen. Michelle Hinchey, to expand eligibility for the New York State Young Farmer Loan Forgiveness Program;
- **The Farm Workforce Retention Credit Increase Bill** (S.3502-A), sponsored by Sen. Hinchey, to double the farm workforce retention credit from \$600 to \$1,200 per farm worker for tax years 2021 through 2025; and
- **The New York State Food Products Bill** (S.6808-A), sponsored by Sen. Hinchey, to increase the purchase of New York farm products by state agencies and facilities.

The Senate also passed a series of agriculture bills Wednesday that Sen. Borrello voted for, including:

- **The One-Stop Farming Hotline Bill** (S.4072), sponsored by Sen. Hinchey, establishes a farming hotline, with assistance from the Cornell Cooperative Extension. The hotline provides information on all aspects of farming including tax credit programs, beginning farmer loans, and sustainable practices;
- **The Office of Urban Agriculture Bill** (S.8059A), sponsored by Sen. Jamaal Bailey, to create the office of Urban Agriculture to assist and promote different forms of urban farming across the state;

- **Produce Produced In State Bill** (S.2199), sponsored by Sen. Kennedy, to direct the Department of Agriculture and Markets to develop and facilitate regional farmers' markets to promote the direct marketing of farm products to large-volume purchasers;
- **Agrivoltaics In Farming Education Bill** (S.7861), sponsored by Sen. Rachel May, to direct the Department of Agriculture and Markets to provide guidance and educational materials on the benefits of co-locating solar power systems on active farmland for crop production;
- **The Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Act** (S.549B), sponsored by Sen. James Sanders Jr., to create the New York State Council on Food Policy to develop state food policies to ensure all New Yorkers are able to eat a healthy diet and avoid food insecurity by consuming New York-grown foods as much as possible; and
- **Farmers Markets in State Parks Bill** (S.5006), sponsored by Sen. Jose Serrano, to permit farmers markets in state and local parks.

“Farming has shaped our landscape and our way of life across the 57th District and New York. It’s also one of our largest industries, employing more than 55,000 people and generating a nearly \$45 billion impact on our state’s economy,” Sen. Borrello said. “I’m proud of the work we’ve done on the Senate Agriculture Committee to draft legislation that protects and promotes our agricultural economy and the farm families that are its heart and soul.

“New York’s farm families produce top-quality products enjoyed across our country and around the globe. That’s something we should all take pride in and support.”

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