



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Darrel J. Aubertine

Aubertine Hosts Energy Roundtable in St. Lawrence County

DARREL J. AUBERTINE December 11, 2009

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Energy Chair, local residents discuss economic development power programs, infrastructure

MASSENA (December 11, 2009)—State Senate Energy & Telecommunications Committee Chair Darrel J. Aubertine today hosted the final roundtable in a series called “Powering New York’s Future” intended to collect input on reforming and improving the state’s economic development power programs and how to best use the resources of the New York Power Authority.

“Power generated right here in our own back yard at the hydro dam is a key resource in our economic development efforts locally with preservation power at Alcoa and statewide through programs such as

Power For Jobs,” said Sen. Aubertine. “These roundtables and hearings are a way to collect input from businesses, trade organizations, economic developers and stake holders to build on the success of these programs and make them stronger engines for economic growth. Rather than wait until a bill has been introduced to hear from these constituent groups statewide, these forums have given us the opportunity to incorporate public input before acting on the bill.”

Dozens of ideas and concepts, along with criticism and praise of the existing models, have been part of the ongoing conversation between lawmakers and the public. Participants have discussed ideas that ranged from accepting the findings of a 2006 executive branch report to scrapping the programs altogether. By and large, the recurring themes have been to simplify the programs, renew them for an extended time period, encourage energy efficiency, make them more transparent for public scrutiny, expand access and make the application and accountability processes more "user friendly."

In Massena, the discussion centered on the multiplier effect that preservation power has had on the region as far south as Oswego in creating jobs beyond the 900 preserved at Alcoa, the benefits that could be seen from link between energy production and agriculture, and the importance of transportation and broadband infrastructure in combination with the low cost power programs.

“I thank the senator for taking the time to have this forum in the North Country,” Wes Oberholzer, Primary location manager for Alcoa in Massena. “We are a unique region and the needs we have for these energy programs are different and need to be included in the process. Having the Senator and the Energy Committee reach out to the community and the industry to ask for our opinion on this is a direction the Legislature could use as a best practice for legislation in Albany.”

New York State has nine separate programs that use low cost energy generated by the New York Power Authority to help create and sustain jobs. The most well-known of these programs is perhaps Power For Jobs, which will expire on May 15, and is responsible for retaining roughly 250,000 jobs in New York. In order to reform these economic development programs so they will provide even greater benefits to New York, the Senate and Assembly Energy Committees have teamed up for the "Powering New York's Future" initiative, holding hearings and roundtables in Buffalo, Niagara Falls, Uniondale, Oswego and Kingston, New York. A concluding hearing is planned for January in Albany.