



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR
Patty Ritchie

THE START OF A SWEET SEASON: SENATOR RITCHIE'S WEEKLY COLUMN

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Here in Central and Northern New York, there are certain things that signal the start of spring. Warmer temperatures, the first sight of flowers sprouting from the ground and of course, trees being tapped for sap that will be turned into maple syrup and other maple products.

During two upcoming weekends—March 19th and 20th and April 2nd and 3rd—more than 160 farms and other locations across the state will open to the public for [New York's annual "Maple Weekends."](#) Maple Weekends are full of events, like tours, breakfasts and more, that show people how maple syrup and other products make their way from tree to table.

As many know, maple is more than just part of many of our favorite foods—it's a major sector of our state and regional agricultural economies. Here in New York, we have the largest resource of tappable maple trees within the United States—and we're second only to Vermont when it comes to syrup production. Today, there are 2.3 million taps in New York State—that's twice the number there were in 2009. In addition, in 2015, syrup production reached its highest level in 70 years, according to the USDA.

Even though New York is a leader in the maple industry, there's still room to grow. As Senate Agriculture Committee Chair, I'm working to ensure our producers have the support they need to put our state on top when it comes to tapping trees and making maple products. This year, I'm once again working to reverse cuts in funding for maple producers in the Governor's and Assembly's budgets. In the Senate's spending plan, proposed funding cuts are fully restored for the Maple Producers Association, which promotes sales of maple products, as well as Cornell University's maple research.

As we kick off the "sugaring season," I encourage you to check out all the events taking place during Maple Weekend. [Click here to learn more.](#)