



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara renews call to repeal the 'Fiber Tax' to spur broadband expansion: Urges Governor Hochul to help close rural digital divide

THOMAS F. O'MARA March 30, 2022

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Albany, N.Y., March 30—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) today renewed calls for Governor Kathy Hochul to repeal the state's costly "fiber-optic tax" that hinders efforts to expand broadband access and close the digital divide in rural communities.

O'Mara, a member of the Senate Energy and Telecommunications Committee, said, "Access to high-speed Internet has become a fundamental need for our families, businesses, farms, local economies, first responders, schools, and the overall success and strength of rural, local communities. We have worked to ensure that rural, upstate New York not be left behind in this mission to bring effective broadband to all New Yorkers, but new initiatives and investments are needed. The single most important action that the state can immediately take is to repeal the 'fiber tax.' Governor Hochul should give this repeal the urgency it demands to ensure that broadband development across rural, upstate New York receives an equal and fair commitment."

O'Mara noted that while the Senate and Assembly approved a fiber tax repeal in their respective one-house budget resolutions, the governor has not yet indicated her support for it.

O'Mara joined several Senate Republican colleagues at a Capitol news conference in February to highlight the need to repeal the fee, established in 2019, for accessing state rights-of-way for fiber optic cables. The legislators said this "fiber tax" only applies to broadband providers and stands as a serious obstacle to broadband development and expansion in rural, upstate communities.

O'Mara and his colleagues said that the \$8 million in state revenue being generated by the fiber tax is holding up billions of dollars in broadband deployment projects throughout the state.