



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

## **Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of June 9, 2025 -- 'Latest Albany mandate sets its sights on dairy industry'**

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Senator O'Mara offers his weekly perspective on many of the key challenges and issues facing the Legislature.

It continues to push government overreach that would have a devastating impact on our rural, upstate local economies where the dairy industry has long been and must remain a mainstay of our region.

# Weekly Column from

NYS SENATOR TOM O'MARA

**for the week of June 9, 2025**

**“Latest Albany mandate sets its sights on dairy industry”**

“To say that I’m a frustrated dairy farmer in New York State would be an understatement. I don’t understand how a bill like this even gets remotely this far.”

That was the reaction of just one New York State dairy farmer at the Capitol last week where a proposal coming out of New York City stirred a rallying cry of Upstate opposition from the New York Farm Bureau and many others, and rightly so.

The “Upstate-Downstate divide” has been one of New York’s longest running shows and there have always been reminders that we remain worlds apart. There’s no denying, however, that these reminders have escalated since 2019 when New York government fell under total, one-party, all-██████████ majority control.

It’s been especially concerning since what it has meant is that state government over the past six years has effectively been under the thumb of New York City-based and oriented leaders whose agendas often seek to impose across-the-board, one-size-fits-all laws, mandates, and rules that might serve big city needs yet inflict unfair and unreasonable burdens on the rest of New York, especially Upstate.

The latest example is legislation introduced by two prominent New York City ██████████ legislators that would effectively ban future dairy farms in New York from expanding beyond 700 cows. It’s an attempt on their part to control what they wrongly view as the proliferation of “factory farms” and their environmental impact.

The opposition has been swift, even among some Upstate ██████████ majority members who fully understand the consequences of a proposal like this one if it ever became law. For now, the measure remains in committee in the Senate and Assembly, which is where it needs to stay.

Upstate United said, “They don’t have dairy farms in their districts, and legislation like this suggests that either they don’t care or are unaware of the industries that support Upstate’s economy. More than 95% of New York’s farms are family owned. At a time when New York State is making significant investments in major processors like Fairlife, Chobani and

aim to work collaboratively with legislators across the state to ensure a future that allows New York's family farms to continue to provide for New York families."

One upstate county agricultural coordinator said, "They haven't done their research. They've never been on dairy farms. How dare they try to regulate something they know nothing about."

The trouble is that these Albany [REDACTED] majorities have gained a foothold at the highest levels of New York government, and they do dare. They have successfully enacted laws, mandates, and rules that simply ignore Upstate New York's economy, traditions, and ways of life at great cost. We've seen it time and again.

In recognition of June as National Dairy Month, Steuben County recently reflected on the importance of our regional and statewide dairy industry with these words, and it can't be said any better:

"Did you know that Steuben County is home to over 1,300 farms, generating more than \$250 million annually? And here's the kicker: half of that comes from milk production alone. That's not just impressive – it's essential. From family-run dairy farms to large-scale operations, our local farmers are the backbone of an industry that feeds New York and beyond. Their hard work supports beloved food companies like BelGioioso Cheese and HP Hood, right here in our region.

"But the impact doesn't stop at the barn door. Dairy farming has one of the highest economic multipliers of any industry – meaning every dollar earned on a dairy farm creates even more earnings across our local economy. Jobs, transportation, equipment, retail, food production – it all connects back to the land and the people who care for it."

This recent attack out of Albany on the future of family dairy farms is just the latest in a long line of ill-informed, misguided, outrageous, and ridiculous proposals. It continues to show a complete lack of understanding. It continues to push government overreach that would have a devastating impact on our rural, upstate local economies where the dairy industry has long been and must remain a mainstay of our region.

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