



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

Senate Democratic Leader Malcolm A. Smith And Senator David J. Valesky Announce Legislation To Ease Equipment Costs For New York Farmers

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New York State Senate Democratic Leader Malcolm A. Smith (D-St. Albans) and State Senator David J. Valesky (D-Oneida) today announced new legislation that would provide farmers interest-free financing to purchase and upgrade equipment.

"At an average cost of \$200,000 for farming equipment, the expense of purchasing and maintaining such critical assets has dealt a hefty blow to farmers' budgets in recent years. This is especially true when you consider the dramatic rise in other farming operational costs," Smith said.

"A revolving loan fund can help farmers run their operations more smoothly at times when several conspiring market conditions make it difficult for many to maintain

financial stability," he added.

Valesky said: "The cumulative impact of soaring fuel prices, a spike in feed and fertilizer costs and volatile milk prices in past years has left a number of farmers with little choice but to put off much-needed equipment upgrades. Today's loan fund proposal is just one part of an overall effort to strengthen and preserve our regional farming culture at a time when many farmers face enormous hardship."

The Agricultural Equipment Revolving Loan Fund Senators Smith and Valesky proposed would be administered by the Empire State Development (ESD) in consultation with the Department of Agriculture and Markets, with program funding generated through the issuance of up to \$40 million in bonds. Priority would be given to applicants in greatest need when awarding loans up to ten years in length.

Loan funding may be used for such purchases as tractors, combines, high-pressure steam boilers, pasteurizing and cooling units, water-treatment plants, bulk tanks, pumps, hay wagons, balers and other kinds of agriculture equipment.

Smith said the legislation stemmed from a recent tour of Central New York farms that Valesky hosted for several members of the Senate Democratic Conference who mostly represent downstate districts. The event, called "Farm Days," was part of a longterm effort to raise awareness about agricultural issues and to shape policies based on the concerns of farmers.

"'Farm Days' was a unique chance for us to learn about modern agricultural operations so that we can all see for ourselves the challenges faced by Upstate farmers," Smith said. "We also learned just how excited farmers in Central New York and other Upstate regions are about improving methods for delivering their products to Downstate consumers -- a proposition that many Senate Democrats are excited about too."

Valesky said a major focus of his legislative agenda in the coming months is to couple demand from New York City markets with supply from Upstate New York's agricultural centers.