



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Seward Plows Under Farm-Threatening Labor Bill

JAMES L. SEWARD April 20, 2010

| ISSUE: **AGRICULTURE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**



ALBANY, 04/20/10 -- Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I-Oneonta) today announced that the Senate Agriculture Committee defeated senate bill 2247b, also known as the Farm Worker Fair Labor Practice Act.

“Defeating the so called, farm worker labor bill is a clear victory for our upstate farmers, farm workers and the agriculture industry,” said Senator Seward. **“The bill, supported mainly by New York City politicians, would have forced farms to close, while driving up costs for the few survivors.”**

The bill would have imposed a number of new mandates on farms including overtime for farm workers, payment of unemployment insurance for small farm employers, disability insurance for off the job injuries and collective bargaining and union organizing.

“Small family farmers are already struggling with higher energy and utility costs, low prices for the food they produce and skyrocketing property taxes. Restricting work hours, increasing paperwork and forcing new expenses on these stewards of the land would have forced many to cut their workforce or close entirely,” Seward added.

He noted that farmers who employ seasonal/migrant workers are subject to rigorous inspections by the Department of Health, Department of Labor and the Department of Environmental Conservation. Employers are subject to the state sanitary code as well as EPA and DEC worker protection standards and are required to pay workers minimum wage. Farm workers are required to have completed farm work agreements which cover pay rates, housing benefits and working conditions. Farm workers are also eligible for state-funded health care and child care.

“New York farms already face strict regulations and are regularly inspected by state and federal authorities. Farmers also provide their workers with quality pay and in many cases, other benefits like housing and food. Farming is a unique business and must be treated as such,” said Seward.

Several trade organizations opposed the legislation including the New York Farm Bureau and the National Federation of Independent Business.

“Plowing under this bad piece of legislation means farmers can now move forward confidently, producing reliable food, and serving as valuable economic partners,” Seward concluded.