



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Darrel J. Aubertine

Senate Shows Support for Farmers, Votes Down Labor Bill

DARREL J. AUBERTINE August 3, 2010

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Vote reflects Aubertine's work to show colleagues how bill would undercut state's top industry

ALBANY (August 3, 2010)—State Sen. Darrel J. Aubertine said today that the open and public debate on farm worker legislation over the past year has brought to light the damage this legislation would have on New York State's farms. As a result, the bill was defeated on the floor of the Senate today.

"Through open and honest public debate, we have seen that the very population this legislation is intended to benefit would suffer if it were passed into law," said Sen. Aubertine, chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee. "We've worked across party lines with open and public hearings, roundtables and debate.

Time and time again we've seen that well-meaning advocates have pushed this bill without recognizing the negative impact it would have on the farm workers it is intended to benefit. We need legislation that benefits farmers, farm workers and consumers alike, not legislation that will force farms out of business, limit the wages earned by workers, and dry up supplies of local produce for consumers."

The latest version of the Farmworker Fair Labor Practices Act was introduced in June and like previous versions, it would have added onerous new regulations and mandates on the state's dwindling number of farms, large and small, with or without full-time employees, as well as increased payroll expenses. Over the past 30 years, New York State has lost farms at a rate of more than one per day.

"Agriculture remains New York State's number one industry, but our farmers are struggling," Sen. Aubertine said. "Farmers are price takers and too often those prices are not high enough to cover expenses. We need to find ways to reduce costs and alleviate the regulatory burden. Voting down this bill today is an affirmation of our agriculture industries and our efforts to ensure safe, local food is made available to consumers by workers who in New York are among the best paid and most protected farm workers in this nation. Protecting the bottom line for our farms is the best way to ensure that we have a safe, stable food supply that is produced responsibly here in New York."

Sen. Aubertine throughout his tenure as Agriculture Committee chair has visited farms and met with agricultural interests across the state to discuss agriculture issues, including this legislation, and held a public hearing in Watertown that included discussion on the issue. The Senate Agriculture Committee held a public hearing on March 1 exclusively on this legislation to gather input from supporters and critics of the bill and on April 20 it was defeated in committee nearly unanimously with just one of nine committee members voting in favor of the legislation.

The Senator has worked with his colleagues, including some who had previously sponsored versions of this bill, to demonstrate the impact the bill would have on New York State's farms, which support hundreds of thousands of jobs on and off the farm across the state. This work ensured that despite one Senator's actions to force a vote on the bill, the bill was in fact defeated.