



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara appointed to Rural Resources Commission

THOMAS F. O'MARA April 13, 2011



Albany, N.Y.—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R-C, Big Flats) announced today that he has been appointed as one of five senators who will serve on the joint, bipartisan Legislative Commission on the Development of Rural Resources.

O'Mara's appointment was made by Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos.

"The commission has long been noted as a voice of rural New York within the state Legislature. I'm excited to take part in its work and to help focus attention on the needs of our rural communities and economies here in the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions and statewide," said O'Mara, whose 53rd Senate District is comprised of Chemung, Schuyler, Steuben and Yates counties, and a portion of Tompkins County.

O'Mara noted that area Assemblyman Phil Palmesano (R-C, Corning) and Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton (D-Ithaca) are also members of the commission, which was chaired by his predecessor in the Senate, former state Senator George Winner, from 2005 to 2009. It's currently chaired by western New York Senator Catharine Young (R-Olean).

The commission, commonly known as the Rural Resources Commission, was established by the Legislature nearly three decades ago. It was created in 1982 to examine the impact of rural communities

and industries on the state economy; review existing state laws and regulations impacting rural regions; assess the effectiveness of state programs and services affecting the needs and problems of rural areas; and develop recommendations for the Legislature to enhance and protect New York's rural resources. It's comprised of 10 members – five from the Assembly, and five senators.

Approximately 44 of New York's 62 counties are designated as rural, including all of the counties O'Mara represents, and the Commission has worked on a range of issues including agriculture, economic development, universal broadband, education, land use, transportation, local government structure and functions, volunteer recruitment and retention, and health care.

"How these issues are addressed at the state level has an enormous impact on many local communities," O'Mara said. He noted that his legislative district encompasses Cornell University in Ithaca, which he praised for its leadership on rural issues through Cooperative Extension and many other Cornell-sponsored initiatives. Legislation developed by the Commission in 2008, which became law, made Cornell home to the nation's first legislatively established "Center for Rural Schools."

"Cornell University has long played a leading role in rural affairs nationally and in New York. It makes sense for the Rural Resources Commission to further develop a working partnership with the university to promote a shared vision and common goals for rural New York's future. I'll be looking forward to opportunities to make that partnership as productive as possible," O'Mara said.