



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David J. Valesky

Senator Valesky Introduces Legislation to Promote Buying New York Products

DAVID J. VALESKY April 18, 2012

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State Senator David J. Valesky (D-Oneida) has introduced legislation (S.6965) building upon “Buy Local” movements to increase awareness of restaurants that sell New York-grown products, thereby helping to strengthen the state’s important agricultural industry.

Senator Valesky, along with his colleagues in the Independent Democratic Conference (IDC) will release a report and two pieces of legislation at a press conference at 2 p.m. today in Albany.

The legislation, along with companion legislation (S.6964) sponsored by Senator David Carlucci (D-Clarkstown), will build upon the successful “Pride of New York” program by creating two additional

designations: “Dine: Pride of New York” will focus on restaurants and “Shop: New York” on markets.

“Our goal is to make these symbols the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval for New Yorkers who want to buy local and eat local,” Senator Valesky said. “By expanding the Pride of New York program, we will help keep New York money in New York, and strengthen our overall economy.”

New York’s agricultural industry is a driving force in the state, accounting for \$31.2 billion in farming and related agricultural activity annually. The IDC report found that while direct sales between farmers and consumers have increased through the expansion of farmers markets, there is much room to grow. A survey of New York State residents found that 41 percent of respondents would buy local products if they were readily available at their local store or supermarket.

Central New York is already seeing a growing effort to support local products. Many restaurant have adopted a local foods focus, promoting in their menus where the products were grown. At Empire Brewery in Syracuse, locally grown food is highlighted on the menu, where patrons are pointed to 56 different farms or producers that Empire uses.

According to Syracuse First, a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to promote buying local products including food, “with just a 10 percent shift in market share from national or global businesses to locally owned independents, \$130 million in new economic activity would be generated in Onondaga County.” In addition, Madison County promotes a “Buy Local Week” each summer where local restaurants showcase menu items which contain products grown in the county itself.

“At a time when there is confusion over what ‘local’ means, Senator Valesky is painting a clear picture using an established brand in ‘Pride of New York,’” Christopher Fowler, Executive Director of Syracuse First, said. “We expect these efforts to have a positive impact on the regional economy and encourage a climate for sourcing local products.”

In Senator Valesky’s legislation, restaurants must demonstrate that 15 percent of their total ingredients are grown and/or processed in New York State in order to qualify for a Dine: Pride of New York designation.

A companion bill, sponsored by Senator David Carlucci and co-sponsored by Senator Valesky, addresses food sellers. At least 20 different food items grown and/or processed in New York must be sold in order to qualify.

Restaurants and food sellers who are designated would be allowed to use a logo to hang in their front windows and to use for advertising and marketing purposes. The businesses would also be listed in a directory on the Agriculture and Markets website.

“New York’s farm families are always seeking new ways to help actively promote New York farm products, both in the grocery store and at farm stands and farmers’ markets, and in local restaurants and specialty stores,” Julie Suarez, New York State Farm Bureau Director of Public Policy, said. “While several grocers and restaurants are already members of the existing Pride of New York program, the

concept of expanding this out further to truly help capitalize on the buy local movement is welcomed by our farmer members.”