



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

## Senate approves creation of new dairy farm energy assistance fund

THOMAS F. O'MARA June 4, 2012

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**Albany, N.Y., June 4**—The New York State Senate today unanimously approved legislation co-sponsored by Senator Tom O'Mara (R-C, Big Flats) to establish a “Dairy Farm Improved Energy Efficiency Loan Fund.”

The measure was approved by a vote of 54-0.

The proposed new loan fund (S.3126/A.5145), which would be administered by the New York State Energy and Research Development Authority (NYSERDA), would provide state grants and low-interest loans to help dairy farmers undertake energy efficiency projects and purchase cutting-edge energy technologies.

“Energy is one of a dairy farm's most burdensome expenses and our dairy farmers are particularly hard hit by high fuel and other energy costs,” said O’Mara, a member of the Senate Agriculture and Energy committees. “This program could help farmers enhance energy efficiency or take advantage of new technology. It would be another wise investment in the future of upstate dairy farms, businesses, and communities.”

Over the past several years many New York State farmers have struggled with extremely low commodity prices that, combined with high energy and feed costs, labor shortages and flooding and other natural disasters, have had a devastating economic impact on many milk producers.

Additionally, low milk prices, an outdated federal price control system, and the escalating costs associated with running family farms have resulted in unprecedented losses for dairy farms throughout New York.

Energy costs are particularly burdensome. Utilities have a harder time servicing farms because of their remote locations at the end of the electric grid infrastructure.

According to O’Mara, the proposed new Dairy Farm Improved Energy Efficiency Loan Fund would provide state assistance to help more dairy farmers utilize high-efficiency lighting, pumping and cooling equipment, and other energy management systems, and could result in significant energy savings and increased milk yields. It would also help accelerate the development of New York's energy services industry, providing new and expanded job

opportunities. Strengthening the energy systems of individual farms and developing micro-grids in remote areas will enhance the overall reliability of the electric system.

The legislation must be approved by the Assembly and signed by Governor Andrew Cuomo before becoming law. It's currently in the Assembly Economic Development Committee.