



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Rural Resources Commission Discusses Successes from Budget, Plans Agenda for Rest of Session

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ALBANY – As the Chair of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I-Olean) announced that the bi-partisan Commission charged with addressing the needs of rural New York has chalked up several policy victories so far this year.

“Traditionally, the Rural Resources Commission has functioned as a think tank with a focus on advancing rural New York. Throughout its thirty year history, the Commission has remained a cooperative effort. It brings together the Legislature as

a whole, as well as interested parties to better understand the issues rural New Yorkers face and to develop legislative solutions to best meet those needs,” said Senator Young.

The Commission tackles a diverse range of issues, from agriculture and education to healthcare and transportation.

Rural Resources Commission proposals that were successfully incorporated in the 2013-14 enacted budget include:

- **\$5 million** secured for our State’s 13 **Critical Access Hospitals (CAH)**—federally recognized facilities that serve geographically isolated communities—ensuring that rural and underserved populations across the State can continue to access quality healthcare. Cuba Memorial Hospital is designated as a CAH.
- An initiative to combat **Medicaid fraud** by requiring quarterly briefings and meetings with the Medicaid Inspector General and social services districts, respectively, which can create legitimate mandate relief in some of our State’s smallest counties.
- Language requiring the Commissioner of Health to convene a home and community based care workgroup among stakeholders to make recommendations on issues like efficient delivery systems with a specific focus on **telehealth**.
- A \$300,000 reappropriation to Cornell University’s successful economic development initiative, **HarvestNY**. Last year, the program demonstrated significant results, training 174 employees in yogurt and dairy processing jobs, increasing the wholesale produce sales by over \$5 million for five regional businesses and netting \$92,000 in collective income for farmers who participated in a successful food hub project.

“The goal of the Commission is to give voice to some of our State’s most underrepresented populations—its rural communities. I am very proud of what the Commission was able to accomplish in this year’s budget as it speaks directly to the fact that the State recognizes the needs of our rural communities and demonstrates a willingness to effectively address them,” added Senator Young.

“It is apparent this commission has been productive since its inception, and I’m excited to be a part of it,” said Commission Co-Chair, Assemblyman Dennis Gabryszak (D-Cheektowaga).

Upcoming priorities include expanding broadband services to the nearly six million New Yorkers who currently cannot access the Internet due to geographic isolation and a lack of service availability. The Commission’s bill (S. 4395), carried by Senator Young, would authorize telephone and telegraph corporations to issue stocks, bonds and notes for the purpose of expanding these services.

Such a measure incentivizes the development of broadband infrastructure, allowing rural communities an opportunity to capitalize on the countless benefits associated with Internet access, including telehealth and virtual learning.

The Commission’s efforts to spur on the production of cellulosic ethanol, a biofuel, is especially noteworthy, as it will position New York to be at the forefront of the emerging biofuel industry. The production of cellulosic ethanol requires the growth of sources such as willow, northern hardwoods and grasses, making New York uniquely situated for its production, given the state’s abundance of forestry, fresh water supplies, and transportation networks.

The production of biofuel is recognized as an economic development opportunity. Investment in the up and coming industry has the potential to create jobs throughout the state. The Commission’s bill (S. 4335), which is sponsored by Senator Young, will provide an additional tax credit for the production of cellulosic ethanol to encourage further industry development.