



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Ted O'Brien

## O'Brien discusses future of video game industry in New York State

TED O'BRIEN | October 30, 2013

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**Roundtable at R.I.T. features local entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, national game industry figures and fellow Senators**

**ROCHESTER, N.Y.** – Today, Senator Ted O'Brien joined fellow legislators and industry experts in discussing how video game design and development can become part of upstate's economic renaissance.

"This is a huge and highly profitable industry, which has exceeded even Hollywood in total revenue for almost a decade," Senator O'Brien said. "With RIT having top-10 programs in game design both for undergraduate and graduate students, I am deeply interested in learning more about how we can help remove barriers and power-up Rochester and the Finger Lakes, helping this region take advantage of the economic opportunities video games represent."

Senator O'Brien joined several fellow members of the State Senate's Select Committee on Science, Technology, Incubation and Entrepreneurship, including its chair, Senator Martin Golden of Brooklyn, in the roundtable discussion which took place at the Rochester Institute of Technology. There, he heard from game developers, both local and of national prominence, academic experts and venture capitalists, and began a conversation about how New York State can help nurture the growth of this industry locally.

Even during the economically sluggish years of 2005 through 2009, the game industry grew about 10 percent annually, far outpacing the broader economy's 2 percent growth during that same time.

"A major component of continuing our region's progress towards economic vibrancy is by taking advantage of the incredibly intelligent and well-educated workforce we have available," said Senator O'Brien. "I see this industry as being one of several that could provide young graduates with good salaries that, combined with our affordable cost of living and excellent quality of life, will help prevent the 'brain drain' and keep people from leaving our state.

Major topics of discussion included developing a better support network for young entrepreneurs, particularly in acquiring the skills necessary for the day-to-day running of a business, and enhancing the abilities of New York State universities to help young people

with great ideas commercialize them. Panelists also discussed in detail the need to develop a critical mass of jobs and businesses, which will lead to cross-pollination of ideas and an increased safety net for individuals taking a risk and starting their own companies to fall back on.

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*Senator O'Brien represents the 55th district in the Senate, which is made up of the eastern half of Monroe County and the western half of Ontario County, including much of the city of Rochester.*

Industry figures on the panel included:

- Blake Gross, RIT Student/Blind Horizon Studios, Inc.
- Colin Doody, Darkwind Media
- Jason Arena, Workinman
- Kenny Johnson, Zephyr Games
- R.J. Mical, Independent Game Developer / Google
- Shane Brennan, EPIX/Studio 3
- Stephane Morichere-Matte, Microsoft Games
- Tobi Saulnier, 1st Playable
- Theresa Mazzullo, Excell Partners
- Robert H. Fritzinger, SUNY Fredonia Technology Incubator
- Denny DeLeo, Trillium Group

**Media contact:**

Thomas J. Morrissey

Communications Director

office: (585) 218-0034

e-mail: [tjmorris@nysenate.gov](mailto:tjmorris@nysenate.gov)