



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Legislature's joint, public budget conference committees begin meeting today to reach agreements on a final state budget ~ O'Mara named to two subcommittees: Environment-Agriculture-Housing, and Economic Development

THOMAS F. O'MARA March 16, 2015

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**Albany, N.Y., March 16**—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R-C, Big Flats) has been named by the Senate leadership to serve on the Legislature's joint budget conference subcommittees on Environment/Agriculture/Housing, and Economic Development, as the next step in New York's budget adoption process gets underway in earnest this week at the Capitol.

The Legislature's 10 individual, joint budget conference subcommittees will begin holding public meetings today to settle Senate and Assembly differences over the 2015-16 New York State budget. The conference committee process more fully set the table for final budget talks with Governor Andrew Cuomo.

Late last week each house of the Legislature approved the changes they'd like to see made to Cuomo's budget proposal.

"**The Senate budget** renews and revitalizes New York's commitment to Upstate job growth, tax relief and community development," said O'Mara. "The core proposals underpinning this fiscal strategy remain true to getting state and local taxpayers out from under America's highest tax burden, creating a stronger commitment to Upstate across the board, and encouraging sustained private-sector job growth."

O'Mara, who chairs the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee, said that his conference committee assignments will afford the opportunity to keep close watch on budget discussions that will impact the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions in key ways. He said, for example, that the Senate budget plan seeks \$200 million for the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), a \$38-million increase over last year and a move that conservation groups and environmental advocates have been calling for. The EPF, enacted in 2007, supports critical environmental initiatives including clean air and water projects and open space preservation. A new energy efficiency category would also be created.

The Senate is also pushing additional provisions of its "Grown in New York" agriculture development plan, which O'Mara cosponsors, a comprehensive legislative program blending tax and regulatory reform incentives, low-interest loans and grants, an expanded student loan forgiveness program and other initiatives to help existing farmers stay on the land and encourage more young men and women to consider careers in agriculture.

Meetings of the Legislature's budget conference subcommittees can be watched live on the following Senate website: [http://www.nysenate.gov/live\\_today](http://www.nysenate.gov/live_today)