



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara named to to Senate's new Workforce Development Task Force

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March 24, 2015

ISSUE:

- [Economic Development](#)



Albany, N.Y., March 24—State Senate leaders have appointed Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C-Big Flats) as a member on the Senate Task Force on Workforce Development.

"Initiatives like the new [Corning Community College welding technology program](#) represent critical tools in the overall effort to make the Upstate New York economy more attractive to manufacturers, industries and other employers. Are we doing enough in New York State to develop and encourage this type of a workforce development action plan?" said O'Mara. "This new Senate task force hopes to answer that question and many others. We're looking to provide a more focused picture of how New York's trying to address the challenge and what we should be doing more effectively."

O'Mara said that the new Task Force on Workforce Development will examine the state's existing job training programs and seek to develop new strategies to strengthen employee readiness in ways that better meet the needs of existing private-sector employers and potentially attract new ones.

O'Mara pointed to the new [CCC welding center in Elmira](#) as a good model of how, for example, local colleges can work together with local businesses and industries to develop the most effective, locally based job training and workforce development strategies. The state Labor Department has identified welding as a high-demand occupation in the Southern Tier that could see up to 5 percent growth over the next several years.

"It's a perfect example, I believe, of a type of a locally based workforce development model and investment that the Senate will seek to encourage, enhance and expand across the board," said O'Mara. "It's a common sense challenge in some respects. We need jobs to employ our workers, but that goes hand in hand with taking steps to ensure that we have the workers to attract the jobs and industries. We hear plenty of discussion about the need for job-creating tax cuts and regulatory reforms, yet maybe not enough about the importance of job retraining and other opportunities to develop specific workforce skills."

The *Democrat and Chronicle* in Rochester [reported early last year how 23,000 jobs in Monroe County in 2013 were unfilled](#), including many that remained persistently open because of the lack of a "middle skilled" workforce in the region qualified for health care, tech, manufacturing and other skilled labor, like welding and mechanics.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are 5 million job openings available nationwide as of January 2015. Despite a decrease in the unemployment rate, many of these jobs are likely to continue to go unfilled due to an ongoing skills gap and an aging workforce.

The new Senate task force plans to solicit input from leaders in business, education, state and local governments, O'Mara said, as well as other workforce experts to develop a better process to connect workers with regional employment needs.

Specific issues the task force will examine include: existing barriers and incentives for institutions and businesses to assist students and existing employees in acquiring new skills; state education policies that could maximize opportunities for high school and college students to obtain industry certifications and take career-themed courses for high-demand jobs; accessibility to information about regional and statewide workforce trends to ensure job training programs targeted to specific skills; job training resources available to unemployed and under-employed New Yorkers; and identifying opportunities for additional collaboration between the education and business sectors.