



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Seward Drives State Funding To Farm Safety Program

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ONEONTA, 09/22/15 – State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I-Oneonta) today marked National Farm Safety and Health week by announcing that the 2015-2016 state budget includes, at his insistence, \$250,000 to protect New York farmers through continuation of the highly successful [New York Rollover Protection System \(ROPS\) Rebate Program](#).

“New York farmers face countless daily challenges yet continue to deliver - providing us all with sustenance and fueling our state’s number one industry,” said Senator Seward. **“Making certain our farmers have proper safety equipment is crucial and that is why I have strongly supported the ROPS rebate program since its inception.”**

Funding for the ROPS rebate program, and other agricultural programs, was left out of the governor’s budget proposal. Senator Seward, a member of the senate agriculture committee, led fellow upstate legislators in successfully fighting to reinstate the funding in the final state budget.

“You cannot put a price tag on the lives of our farmers. In the grand scheme of a \$142 billion dollar budget, the ROPS rebate program funding is a small expenditure, but it can mean the difference between life and death in the event of a tractor accident,” added Seward.

The New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health (NYCAMH) administers the ROPS program, now in its ninth year, which has outfitted over 1,400 tractors with the life-saving rollover protection.

Julie Sorensen, Ph.D., MA, BA, director of NYCAMH said, “The ROPS program has expanded greatly since it was launched by NYCAMH in 2006 and Senator Seward’s consistent support is a prime reason for the program’s growth. Helping farmers do their job safely improves life on the farm and life for all.”

A farmer’s risk of dying on the job is eight times higher than that of the average American worker and tractor overturns are the primary cause. In the event of a rollover, the use of ROPS and a seatbelt reduces the risk of injury by 99 percent.

Use of ROPS without a seatbelt is less effective, but still reduces serious injury by 70 percent. Tractors built after 1985 have built-in rollover protection, but many tractors in use today are older than that.

Senator Seward announced the state funding at the Schmidt's Sunny Slope Farm in Sherburne. Farm owner Mark Schmidt said, "With the volatile milk prices I receive as a dairy farmer, it is hard enough to pay the daily bills and keep my equipment in working order. Sadly, on my farm and many others, safety can often get overlooked. The ROPS rebate program, supported by NYCAMH and Senator Seward, has enabled me to better protect myself from injury due to a roll over. With the cost of a ROPS at over \$2100 for my tractor, there is no way I would have ever installed one on my own. Farmers are becoming more and more of an endangered species but it's nice to know there are people that care about our safety and that this program is available for farmers to protect themselves from a tragic overturn."

Schmidt was one of the earliest farmers to utilize the ROPS rebate program to retrofit a 1968 John Deere 3020 in April 2007. He has since sold that tractor and it is now in use on a small family run beef farm in eastern New York. Schmidt has just received a second ROPS through the program and will be installing it on his 1978 International Harvester 684.

Bradd Vickers, president of the Chenango County Farm Bureau said, "The ROPS program is a safety net for our farmers and is highly successful in preventing tractor overturn fatalities. Expanding the program to help more farmers in New York has proved challenging due to the limited availability of financial, human, and other resources. I am extremely thankful that Senator Seward and NYCAMH have continued to champion this critical safety program."

Farmers interested in more information should call toll-free 1-877-ROPS-R4U (1-877-767-7748) or check on-line at www.ropsr4u.com. The ROPS program will rebate 70 percent of the cost of purchasing and installing the roll bar system up to a maximum out of pocket cost of \$500. Should the out of pocket expense to a farmer be greater than \$500 then NYCAMH will increase the rebate to ensure that a farmer does not have to shoulder a higher expense.

"This is a valuable investment in our farming future. I congratulate NYCAMH on their leadership in farm safety and stand ready to partner with them moving forward in protecting our New York farmers and ensuring agricultural productivity," Seward concluded.