



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## WHY MARCH IS OUR SWEETEST SEASON

PATTY RITCHIE March 22, 2011

If you are ever in the town of Hermon, just as the winter weather breaks, make it a point to visit Woody's Sugar Barn.

You'll see why New York State ranks second in the nation in Maple Syrup production and come away understanding how the people who make up the New York State Maple Producers Association are convinced we can eventually overtake our friends in Vermont and become number one.

Over the past few weeks, I have been visiting St. Lawrence, Jefferson and Oswego Counties to speak with some of the 90 small business owners producing Maple syrup. My husband and I spent a recent Saturday with Jim and Joan Woodrow who own Woody's Sugar Barn in the town of Hermon to kick off what I have always considered to be the sweetest season of the year.

The Woodrows combine the best of the old and new, combining the latest technological advances in Maple production at their family's picturesque barn that is decorated with a variety of antique agricultural implements.

As the chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I wanted to see how small business owners like the Woodrows are creating a whole array of Maple products and creating new jobs at their family businesses.

Like a lot of Maple syrup producers, tapping Maple trees has been a family tradition for generations of the Woodrow family. But the Woodrows recognized the potential it offers and are working with other Maple producers to expand the business by bringing customers to their rustic production facility where they can see it being made and taste goodies like Maple spreads, cookies and, of course, syrup.

New York State has an estimated 289 million Maple trees, but only one percent are actually being tapped.

Ironically, we have nearly 200 million more Maple trees than Quebec, the world's leading maple syrup producer. But we actually tap 40 million fewer trees than Quebec. That's why our nation is actually importing this natural sweetener and Canada is actually producing 85 percent of the world's Maple syrup supply.

Just recently, I sponsored a bill to make it easier for the 500 Maple producers across the State to invite customers and groups to their sugar shacks by cutting cumbersome regulations that were preventing family farmers from sharing this rural tradition with visitors.

It's my job to stand up for our state's 36,000 family farms to keep bureaucrats from imposing foolish mandates that make it tougher for agribusinesses to grow and prosper.

I hope you'll see what our Maple Producers are doing in your county. That's why I'm

including this list of Maple Producer Association members in Oswego, Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties.

Here's the list of Maple Producers:

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