



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph E. Robach

Empire State Games to Return

JOSEPH E. ROBACH October 4, 2012

| ISSUE: **FAMILIES, RECREATION AND TOURISM**



Rochester, N.Y. – Michael G. Carey, son of Governor Hugh Carey, today joined a host of athletes, sports dignitaries, and local elected officials to announce plans to bring back the Empire State Games through the creation of a new not-for-profit foundation, the Empire State Sports Foundation. The private foundation has taken over the planning, promotion and organization of the summer games thanks to a recent agreement signed with the New York State Parks Department.

Carey, who will serve as president of the foundation's Board of Governors, detailed the significant progress being made to permanently bring back the summer games, including a plan to reunify the two games under the banner of the Empire State Games and the Empire State Sports Foundation.

"We are all here for one reason, we love the Empire State Games," said Michael Carey. "We love what these games have meant for our state, for our communities and for our athletes. And now, today, we are here to announce that we are moving forward with the plan to bring back the Empire State Summer Games. The people of New York want the games back, and we are going make it happen."

The 33rd annual Winter Games will again be held in Lake Placid, on February 7-10, 2013. And plans are in place to hold the Summer Games July 24th-28th in the Rochester area, with events at SUNY Brockport, Monroe Community College, Roberts Wesleyan College and SUNY Geneseo.

Also announced today is news that two of New York State's top athletes are lending their voices to the effort to bring back the Empire State Games. Alumni of the games Stephen Gionta and Abby Wambach have both agreed to serve as honorary members of the ESSF Board of Governors. Stephen Gionta was on hand to help make the announcement.

“I played in the Empire State Games, and I loved it,” said NHL winger Stephen Gionta. “It was one of the most memorable moments of my young hockey career. To play against the best in the state, to play for my region, to play for a gold medal – nothing compares. I hope all alumni join me in lending their voice and helping to bring back the Empire State Games.”

“I am so excited for the return of the Empire State Games,” said U.S. Soccer great Abby Wambach. “My memories from the Games are still vivid as I relished competing against the best athletes in New York. I encourage everyone to join me in celebrating the Empire State Games so we can give another generation of young athletes an opportunity to play, a reason to train hard, and a chance to dream big.”

The Empire State Games were founded in 1978 by Governor Hugh Carey, and quickly became an important part of New York’s athletic culture. Due to the fiscal crisis, the games’ state funding was cut in 2009, and the games were permanently discontinued in 2010. The Winter Games continued thanks to the work of Lake Placid and all the communities of the Adirondack region.

Under the new private model, the games will be supported by the work of the not-for-profit Empire State Sports Foundation, which will be funded primarily through private sources and corporate sponsorship. As designed, the work of the foundation will benefit both the Summer Games and the Winter Games, rejoining the two events under a unified mission.

"This is the start of a new chapter in Empire State Games history," said James McKenna, president of the Lake Placid-based Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism. "Our partnership puts in motion a public/private model, ensuring that the Adirondacks' Winter Games will continue, and that the potential for both events to grow is unlimited."

"ORDA is once again excited to be hosting several of the 33rd annual Empire State Winter Games' competition on its venues. We hope that these games, and even the legacy of the venues, will help to inspire these young athletes to obtain even loftier goals, not only in sport, but in life," said Ted Blazer, Pres/CEO of ORDA (Olympic Regional Development Authority).

"One of the most important aspects of these very popular games coming back is the economic impact it will have on our area by bringing in participants, their families, and volunteers to our community for the 2013 Empire State Games," said State Sen. Joe Robach (R-Rochester)

"We are very pleased to host the Empire State Games next summer," said Rochester Mayor Thomas S. Richards. "The success of the Games depends on a true community effort and we are thankful to the Carey family, the Foundation and New York State for taking steps to bring them back and honor our great, former Governor, Hugh Carey."

The Empire State Sports Foundation is committed to giving the state's top amateur athletes a chance to compete at the highest level. Visit the Empire State Games on Facebook or on the web, and register to stay informed: <http://www.empirestatesummergames.org> or www.empirestatewintergames.com.

"To make these games a success, we need all the athletes, all the alumni and all the supporters of amateur sports to get involved," said Carey. "It's up to all New Yorkers to help make the Empire State Games happen. Together, we will give New York athletes a world class competition and the experience of a lifetime. We will give young and old athletes across the state another reason to be active, to train, and to compete. And we will give another generation of athletes a chance to play."