



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

RITCHIE: NEW OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES DISCUSSED AT FIRST SENATE AG COMMITTEE MEETING OF 2016

PATTY RITCHIE January 26, 2016



VIDEO OF TUESDAY'S MEETING AVAILABLE HERE

In their first meeting of 2016, the Senate Agriculture Committee was joined Tuesday by special guests from Cornell University who spoke about new opportunities, as well as new challenges involving the state's agriculture industry.

Hosted by Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Senator Patty Ritchie, the meeting featured Dr. Kathryn Boor, Dean of the School of Agriculture and Life Sciences, who touched on

accomplishments of the past year involving Cornell-run programs like Harvest NY and PRO-DAIRY. Senator Ritchie was key to securing additional state budget funding for the programs, including restoring budget cuts and expanding proven programs that help farmers grow.

The meeting's second speaker, Dr. Lorin Warnick, Interim Dean of the Veterinary School at Cornell University, discussed the college's work in the area of disease surveillance, in particular, rabies.

"Cornell University has always been a tremendous partner in our efforts to grow New York's agriculture industry and in recent years, this committee has led the way in fighting for funding that supports a number of the programs they run that support our farmers," said Senator Ritchie.

"As we continue to negotiate a new state budget, the firsthand knowledge and information shared today by our guest speakers will help us make a stronger case for the vitally important funding that not only keeps the ag programs they oversee functioning, but also encourages the further growth of our state's leading industry."

At Tuesday's meeting, guests from Cornell discussed a number of new efforts to encourage the growth of New York agriculture, including a new program aimed at reducing costs for those pursuing degrees through the University's College of Veterinary Medicine and a first of its kind initiative that seeks to provide education, training and support to New York military veterans interested in careers in agriculture and farming.

In addition, Dr. Boor also touched on the importance of past support from the committee, citing the key investments in programs such as Harvest NY, PRO-DAIRY, NY FarmNet and research programs, among others.

“Each time you bite into a strawberry or raspberry grown in a New York farm field, or enjoy local squash with your fall meals, know that the work that you have done to secure agricultural research dollars has helped make sure that those fruits and vegetables are free of insects and plant diseases,” said Dr. Boor.

“If we are to capitalize on the opportunities here in New York, we need to work together. Industry members, state leaders, and institutions like Cornell each play a vital role in making agriculture an economic driver in New York State.”

In addition to discussing past successes and new opportunities, Cornell guests also brought to light new—and ongoing—challenges facing the agriculture industry, including Salmonella Dublin, a bacterial infection that’s an emerging problem in New York dairy herds, the need to expand programs aimed at preventing avian flu and wildlife rabies.

With more than 2,300 cases of rabies reported statewide since 2010—including 146 in Jefferson, Oswego, and St. Lawrence Counties—the Senate Agriculture Committee has advocated in recent years for increased funding to support Cornell’s efforts to stop the spread of the deadly disease.

In 2015, Senator Ritchie led the way to secure increased support that helped expand the area where Cornell conducts rabies “bait drops.” This unique effort—which was discussed Tuesday by Dr. Warnick—utilizes low-flying planes to drop small packets containing a vaccine, surrounded by a mixture of sugar, vegetable fat and other flavors, that are then consumed by animals, namely raccoons.