



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Farmers Thank Ritchie For Support Of Program That Outfits Tractors With Life-Saving Equipment

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Agriculture leaders came together Tuesday in St. Lawrence County to thank Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Senator Patty Ritchie for her support of a program that's helping to protect farmers from the danger of tractor rollovers, which are the leading cause of death on a farm.

In recent years, Senator Ritchie successfully advocated for restoring \$950,000 in funding—including \$250,000 in the most recent state budget—for the Rollover Protective Structure (ROPS) Rebate Program, which helps equip tractors with an important piece of safety equipment that helps reduce the risk of injury by up to 99 percent in the event of a tractor overturn. Since its establishment 10 years ago, the ROPS Rebate Program—which is administered by the New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health—has outfitted 1,500 tractors with safety equipment, which is up from roughly 1,300 a year ago.

On Tuesday, Senator Ritchie visited the farm of William “Toby” Irven, a Canton horse farmer who has outfitted two tractors with life-saving equipment through the ROPS Rebate Program. Also joining in the press conference were New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health Director Dr. Julie Sorensen and ROPS Hotline Coordinator Rebecca Russell.

“When most people think of dangerous jobs, farming probably doesn’t immediately come to mind—however, the fatality rate for farmers is 800 percent higher than all other American workers, with the leading cause of death on a farm being tractor rollover incidents,” said Senator Ritchie, who in addition to advocating for restoring funding for the ROPS Rebate Program, also worked to expand the types of tractors that could be outfitted with the safety equipment.

“As Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I know how critical it is to not only support the important work of our hardworking farmers, but also to keep them safe while on the job. That’s why in recent years; I’ve made it a priority to advocate for funding for the ROPS Rebate Program, which every day is helping to save the lives of

farmers locally and across New York State.”

“It’s always said that you can’t put a price on safety, and that’s something that especially holds true on a farm,” said Canton farmer William “Toby” Irven. “I would like to thank Senator Ritchie for recognizing just how important this program is to helping lessen costs for farmers across the state and to allowing us to stay safe while we work to grow New York’s leading industry.”

“Every day, farmers across our state face countless challenges and it’s programs like this that help them to overcome those challenges and out of harm’s way while on the job,” said Dr. Sorensen. “I would like to thank Senator Ritchie for continuing to advocate for the ROPS Rebate Program, which is helping to protect the future of family farming.”

While most tractors built after 1985 have built-in rollover protection, tractors manufactured prior to that date—which many farmers use—do not have the safety feature in place. The ROPS Rebate Program helps protect farmers by covering 70 percent of the cost of purchasing and installing ROPS, up to a maximum out of pocket cost of \$500. If a farmer’s out of pocket expense is greater than \$500, the New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health will increase the rebate to ensure the cost is capped at \$500.

It’s estimated that every year, 96 farmers across the country are victims of tractor rollovers, with farmers in the Northeast experiencing the highest rates of overturn deaths. In addition, experts say that 80 percent of deaths caused by rollovers happen to those who have been in the business for a very long time.

Farmers looking for more information on the ROPS Rebate Program can call the ROPS Rebate Hotline at 1-877-ROPS-R4U or visit www.ropsr4u.com.