



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara: Agriculture Committee report highlights ongoing Senate support for farming and agriculture ~ [View full report here](#)

THOMAS F. O'MARA January 25, 2017

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Elmira, N.Y., January 25—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) today said that the Senate Agriculture Committee's 2016 Annual Report is currently available for area farmers,

local leaders and any area residents interested in reviewing state legislative proposals impacting agriculture that were proposed or acted on last session.

O'Mara has served as a member on the Senate Agriculture Committee since 2011. The committee is currently chaired by Senator Patty Ritchie (R,C,IP-Watertown).

O'Mara said that the Senate has led the way over the past several years, particularly through its comprehensive "Grown in New York" strategy, on developing and securing the enactment of numerous new laws, programs and services to strengthen New York's leading agricultural industry. The Senate has consistently fought to restore cuts in state funding proposed by Governor Andrew Cuomo including last year's Senate-led restoration of more than \$12 million of Cuomo-proposed cuts affecting 30 different agricultural programs. Since 2011, O'Mara and his colleagues have initiated budget restorations and funding for new programs totaling more than \$55 million.

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The Senate Agriculture Committee's just-released report highlights record funding for agriculture, new programs to encourage the state's next generation of farmers and other legislative actions to benefit agriculture that were taken in 2016. The report details the more than \$12 million in proposed budget cuts restored by the Senate for a wide range of farm

programs in the 2016-17 state budget.

Other highlights include:

- > funding for a new “Vets to Farms” program based at Cornell University that seeks to connect veterans with training opportunities and experience in operating a farm;
- > funding for a third round of “Beginning Farmer” grants providing financial help to farmers who have been in business for less than 10 years and who are looking to purchase land, buildings or supplies;
- > record funding for Future Farmer of America (FFA) programs that provide students with opportunities to learn about agriculture and develop leadership skills;
- > record funding to prevent the spread of diseases such as wildlife rabies and eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE); and
- > renewed funding for student loan forgiveness for beginning farmers.

As a member of the committee, O'Mara also sponsored a new law in 2016 (**S6960/A9310, Chapter 256 of the Laws of 2016**) to continue efforts he's undertaken over the past few years together with Southern Tier Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo (D-Endwell) to encourage the ongoing development of an industrial hemp industry in New York State. **The new law authorized the sale, distribution, transportation and processing of industrial hemp.**

The Agriculture Committee also provided opportunities in 2016 for legislators and the public to hear from industry leaders including FFA students, Cornell University researchers and staff, and representatives from leading agricultural advocates including the New York Farm Bureau, American Farmland Trust, NY FarmNet and others.

A full copy of the report is attached above.