



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara hosts Rebuild NY Now 'Support Clean Water Infrastructure' rally in Albany: Senate budget proposal includes \$5-billion Clean Water Bond Act and establishes Drinking Water Quality Institute

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Albany, N.Y., March 20—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats), Chair of the Senate Environmental Protection Committee, today sponsored a “Support Clean Water Infrastructure” rally in Albany and joined supporters in calling for stronger state commitment to improving and rebuilding New York’s water quality infrastructure.

The rally was held in The Well of the Legislative Office Building, where O'Mara addressed those in attendance. Rebuild NY Now is a partnership of local leaders and other supporters from throughout New York seeking to raise public awareness about the issues facing the state’s water, transportation and other vital infrastructure.

“We know that the many challenges surrounding water quality are here to stay,” OMara said. “Consequently, funding and other water quality initiatives are clearly among the top priorities in 2017. I greatly appreciate the Rebuild NY Now effort to build grassroots support for an unprecedented state response this session.”

[View Senator O'Mara addressing today's rally [HERE](#)]

O'Mara and his Senate Republican colleagues recently called for the approval of \$5-billion "Clean Water Bond Act," the establishment of a "Drinking Water Quality Institute" and other initiatives to enhance and speed up the state's efforts to improve drinking water safety and water quality infrastructure for all New Yorkers. The Senate proposals, totaling \$8 billion, are included in a "one-house" budget plan approved by the Senate last week and will be Senate priorities throughout final negotiations over the final, 2017-2018 state budget.

"These proposed actions focus on helping localities undertake vital and long-overdue water infrastructure projects, including sewer and municipal water line repairs, and fully recognize that drinking water quality concerns and crises regionally, statewide and across the nation have become increasingly acute. It's a timely, commonsense budget strategy that makes great environmental, fiscal and economic sense," said O'Mara.

The Senate plan includes:

- > the creation of a \$5-billion Clean Water Bond Act to provide critical funds for many different types of projects to prevent contamination that endangers public health and safety, clean up pollution, protect water sources, and promote the growth of the economy through infrastructure investment;

- > support for \$2 billion to establish the Water Quality Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2017 to fund immediately necessary improvements that meet the varying needs of communities statewide. If the proposed \$5-billion bond act receives voter approval, that funding would be added to what remains of the proposed \$2 billion to ensure more infrastructure needs are met under a quicker timeframe than one proposed earlier this year by Governor Andrew Cuomo.

- > establishment of a Drinking Water Quality Institute comprised of public health experts, scientists, water purveyors, and the commissioners of state departments of Health and Environmental Conservation. The Institute would be charged with setting New York-specific standards for unregulated contaminants that are at least as stringent as federal health advisories; developing a list of contaminants for which testing is required by public water suppliers; and establishing a clear notification process for municipalities, state agencies, and the public. New York must do all it can to err on the side of caution when it comes to contaminants in our drinking water;

- > creation of the “Emerging Contamination Monitoring Act” to better protect public health and establish safety thresholds for drinking water contaminants;
- > support for \$300 million for the state’s Environmental Protection Fund (EPF);
- > continued funding for the existing Water Quality Infrastructure Investment Program, which, over the past two years after Senate Republicans successfully fought for its establishment in 2015, has provided critical state assistance to help localities undertake water and environmental infrastructure improvement projects. This year’s Senate proposal supports the continuation of \$175 million for 2017-2018 to provide municipal grants – the last of a \$400-million, three-year commitment – for the replacement and repair of existing wastewater infrastructure and drinking water infrastructure; and
- > ongoing funding for state-administered Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds that provide low-cost financing and grants for the construction of water system projects and drinking water improvements in disadvantaged communities. A total of \$205 million would be provided for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund and \$70 million for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund.

Read more on the Senate plan [HERE](#).

A new state budget is scheduled to take effect on April 1, the start of New York’s new fiscal year.