



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Seward Drives State Funding to Lifesaving Farm Safety Program

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MOHAWK, 09/12/18 – State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I/Ref-Oneonta) today helped open the CNY Farm Progress Show by announcing that the 2018-2019 state budget includes, at his insistence, \$250,000 to protect New York farmers through continuation of the highly successful New York Rollover Protection System (ROPS) Rebate Program.

“New York farmers face countless daily challenges yet continue to deliver – providing us all with sustenance and fueling our state’s number one industry,” said Senator Seward. **“Making certain our farmers have proper safety equipment is crucial and that is why I have strongly supported the**

ROPS rebate program since its inception.”

Funding for the ROPS rebate program, and other agricultural programs, was left out of the governor’s budget proposal. Senator Seward, a long-standing member of the senate agriculture committee, led fellow upstate legislators in successfully fighting to reinstate the funding in the final state budget.

“You cannot put a price tag on the lives of our farmers. In the grand scheme of the overall state budget, the ROPS rebate program funding is a small expenditure, but it can mean the difference between life and death in the event of a tractor rollover. This year, as in the past, I fought hard to ensure this crucial funding was included in the final state budget,” added Seward.

The ROPS Rebate Program, now in its twelfth year, has outfitted over 1,690 tractors in New York State with the life-saving rollover protection. The ROPS Rebate Program has now expanded nationally as other states follow New York’s successful blueprint. The National ROPS Rebate Program is administered by the Northeast Center for Occupational Health and Safety- Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (NEC).

Director of NEC and the New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health (NYCAMH) Julie Sorensen, Ph.D., MA, BA, said, “The ROPS program has expanded greatly since it was launched by NYCAMH in 2006 and Senator Seward’s consistent support is a prime reason for the program’s growth. Helping farmers do their job safely improves life on the farm and life for all.”

A farmer’s risk of dying on the job is eight times higher than that of the average American worker and tractor overturns are the primary cause. In the event of a rollover, the use of ROPS and a seatbelt reduces the risk of fatal and non-fatal injury by 99 percent. Use of ROPS without a seatbelt is less effective, but still reduces the risk of death or serious injury by 70 percent. Tractors built after 1985 have built-in rollover protection, however, tractors are constructed to last and many older models are still in use today.

Along with saving lives, the ROPS Rebate Program also provides substantial cost savings to New York State. A soon to be released report by the NEC and NYCAMH indicates that the total cost of the injuries averted from 2007-2017 was \$6,018,742 versus a total program cost of \$1,776,608. The one-time retrofit costs will continue to prevent injuries as long as the tractors are used, generating additional [projected] future savings of \$12,136,512, \$15,781,027, and \$18,924,818 if retrofitted tractors remain in operation 15, 20, or 25 years after their retrofit.

Matthew Reinert, a Navy veteran originally from North Dakota, moved with his wife, Kathy, to upstate New York and owns and operates an Otsego County farm. Reinert has utilized the ROPS Rebate Program to retrofit two tractors. "All of our tractors are older model machines not originally equipped with rollover protection," said Reinert. "With my own and my family's safety in mind I started exploring ROPS options and I found out about the rebate program through a friend from Boonville. The ROPS Rebate Program is very easy to apply for and allowed me to equip two of my tractors with ROPS systems, giving me great peace of mind, knowing that my young son could safely operate them."

CNY Farm Progress Show President Dick Presky said, "The CNY Farm Progress Show is a showcase for all aspects of farming and agriculture, and safety is certainly a vital element. Senator Seward has always been there for our farmers and his work to fund the ROPS program is another example of his dedication. I would certainly encourage any farmer with an older tractor to take advantage of this key safety program."

Farmers interested in more information should call toll-free 1-877-ROPS-R4U (1-877-767-7748) or check on-line at www.ropsr4u.com. The ROPS program will rebate 70 percent of the cost of purchasing and installing the roll bar system. Should the out of pocket expense to a farmer be greater than \$500 then NYCAMH will increase the rebate to ensure that a farmer does not have to shoulder a higher expense.

“This is a valuable investment in our farming future. I congratulate our local farm health and safety experts at NYCAMH and the NEC on their leadership in this field and stand ready to partner with them moving forward in protecting our New York farmers and ensuring agricultural productivity,” Seward concluded.