



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara: Who's going to look out for NYS agriculture?

THOMAS F. O'MARA January 10, 2019

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Albany, N.Y., January 10—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) today urged Governor Andrew Cuomo to protect funding for key state agricultural programs and services in his 2019-2020 proposed state budget, which the governor plans to release next Tuesday.

O'Mara warned, however, that Cuomo's track record hasn't been positive when it comes to agricultural funding in proposed state budgets in the past.

“Every year Governor Cuomo tries to cut millions and millions of dollars in critical funding for proven and successful agricultural programs and services,” said O’Mara. “In the past Senate Republicans have rejected these cuts outright and successfully fought to restore them, year after year. I’m concerned about who’s going to be in agriculture’s corner in the same way in 2019 in a state government that’s now under one-party, Democratic control? The governor may now be feeling liberated to ram these cuts through the Legislature and the question is, who’s going to stop him?”

Last year, for example, Senate Republicans fought to restore more than \$10 million in agricultural program funding cuts Cuomo proposed in the 2018-2019 state budget. From 2011 to last year, O’Mara said that the Senate GOP has been responsible for budget restorations totaling more than \$50 million. Among other programs and institutions the governor has consistently proposed to cut or eliminate funding for are the Wine and Grape Foundation, Farm-to-Seniors Assistance, Tractor Rollover Prevention Program, FarmNet (Farm Family Assistance), Local Fair Assistance, and the Cornell Diagnostic Lab along with other vital Cornell research and study programs invaluable to the dairy industry among other critical agricultural challenges including food safety research and study, disease detection and prevention, honeybee die-off, invasive species, pesticide use, and rabies prevention and treatment.

O’Mara said, “Senate Republicans will continue to stand up and speak out for our farmers and the entire agricultural industry. We will continue to oppose any state government actions that risk taxing, pricing, or regulating farmers out of business. We will continue to wage the fight for keeping New York State as one of America’s leading agricultural states because the agricultural industry always has been and must remain a foundation of our local communities and economies. History warns, however, that some state Democratic leaders may not share the same level of commitment and that’s a red flag at the start of the

2019 legislative session. We are going to have to do everything we can to convince this new Legislature that agriculture must remain a top priority.”