



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column ~ for the week of September 28, 2020 ~ 'Local, regional teamwork always key to our success'

THOMAS F. O'MARA September 28, 2020

| ISSUE: **STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**



We have worked together day in and day out over these past years, especially over the past six months of the COVID-19 emergency, to keep together, persevere and keep pushing forward. This ongoing teamwork will certainly be critical to our success in the months and years ahead, which promise to be as difficult as any we have ever faced.

Senator O'Mara offers his weekly perspective on many of the key challenges and issues facing the Legislature, as well as on legislative actions, local initiatives, state programs and policies, and more. Stop back every Monday for Senator O'Mara's latest column...

This week, "Local, regional teamwork always key to our success"

Over my time representing the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions – and even before that while I was growing up here in Chemung County, beginning to get involved in public service myself and starting to raise my own family here – I have always been struck by the fact that when it got down to it, our regional representatives, at every level of government, more often than not fell back on a long and important tradition of working together to get the job done.

Regardless of political party or ideology or anything else that far too often, in far too many other places, seems to stand in the way of effective government, division and infighting is not what has defined the nuts-and-bolts delivery of government in our region.

It is a tradition of service that has served our communities well, in my opinion. I'm proud that we do our best to carry it on to this day, because it will now become more critical than ever before. Believe me, we will be fortunate to have the foundation for cooperation already in place to confront the enormous challenges ahead of us.

Now is no time to turn our backs on this vital sense of governing that I believe has defined our region for the better for so long in this district in Corning and Hornell, Penn Yan and Watkins Glen, Elmira and Ithaca, and everywhere in between.

We should be proud of it, and I think we are.

It is the reason that I have been grateful to join legislative colleagues across the region, at every level of government, every step of the way, to build the partnerships and the cooperation that ultimately make the difference on the ground for the communities we represent. County executives and managers, city and village mayors, town supervisors, local highway superintendents, first responders, not-for-profit service providers, you name it and here at home, we enjoy a healthy tradition of trying to always build these collaborative federal-state-local efforts to strengthen the foundations of local communities.

We look to join together to set goals, identify and solve problems, and work cooperatively to achieve important projects on priorities like strengthening our police and fire departments, enhancing public safety and security, boosting job creation and economic development, improving local roads and bridges, developing water quality infrastructure, revitalizing downtowns and Main Streets, combating invasive species, and so much more – and to do it in ways that try to ease the burden on

local property taxpayers.

I am proud to have helped deliver four Downtown Revitalization Initiative awards of \$10 million each for the revitalization of the communities of Elmira, Watkins Glen, Penn Yan and Hornell through our regional economic development councils. That's more winners than any other Senate district.

It takes collaboration, it takes steadfast commitment (rarely does anything happen overnight in government), it takes experienced know-how, and it takes the kind of trust that can only be formed over time.

I began this column expressing that we have been fortunate to have this strong commitment to federal-state-local teamwork across this region for many years. I believe it has served us well.

It has helped us weather more than our share of natural disasters. It has helped us improve local infrastructure, protect local waterways and other environments, and secure resources for local schools. It has allowed us to begin rebuilding local economies, fight back against an unreasonable state-mandated property tax burden, and confront so many other challenges.

It has certainly made an enormous difference throughout the COVID-19 public health crisis, where we have had to quickly marshal resources and engage collaborative public outreach in unforeseen and unprecedented ways for the sake of workers, families, the elderly and other vulnerable populations and economic sectors.

We have worked together day in and day out over these past years, especially over the past six months of the COVID-19 emergency, to keep together, persevere and, somehow, stay afloat and keep pushing forward.

This ongoing teamwork will certainly be critical to our success in the months and years ahead, which promise to be as difficult as any we have ever faced.