



Dear Constituent:

The 2020 Session of the New York State Legislature gets underway in early January and, consequently, it's time to start turning attention to the new year's legislative priorities. From agriculture to workforce development, there remains a long list of challenges demanding action.

What are the priorities?

Headlining the agenda, in my view, is that New York State still finds itself at or near the bottom of far too many rankings of the worst states in America for high taxes and high costs. The same holds true for how this state stands as a place to do business and create long-term, sustainable jobs.

It has to change.

For example, now is not the time to enact or expand programs and services in 2020 that will vastly increase state government spending and borrowing – or impose higher taxes and fees on already overburdened state and local taxpayers.

Resisting a tax-and-spend approach to government emerges as the big challenge heading into 2020.

How do we restore a place for common sense and long-term spending restraint in government?

My continued best wishes to you and your family.

Sincerely,

## SENATOR O'MARA URGES OVERSIGHT OF "FARMWORKERS FAIR LABOR PRACTICES ACT"

One of the signature actions of the 2019 Legislative Session was the approval of controversial legislation (S6578/A8419, Chapter 105 of the Laws of 2019) known as the "Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act."

Senator O'Mara is now calling for continued, aggressive legislative oversight of the Act's implementation and an ongoing assessment of its impact on the rural, upstate farm economy.

Senator O'Mara and other opponents fear that mandatory overtime pay and other actions called for under the new law, including the creation of a three-member Farm Wage Board granted the authority to unilaterally change the law's provisions, will greatly exacerbate the impact of farm labor costs on farm income at a time when the farm economy is already struggling.

They have warned throughout the past year that it could drive more family farms out of business and have other profound repercussions throughout local farm economies across rural, upstate New York.

Senator O'Mara debated and voted against the measure when the Senate approved it in June.

"Too many family farms across our region and statewide are already struggling to make ends meet and survive. This action has implications for family farms and an entire agricultural industry that

has long been the cornerstone of economies and cultures across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, and throughout upstate New York," the Senator said.

Senator O'Mara, Corning-area Assemblyman Phil Palmesano and many of the Act's opponents, including the New York Farm Bureau and Unshackle Upstate, argue that it will increase already exorbitant farm labor costs in New York State by nearly \$300 million or close to 20%, resulting in an across-the-board drop in net farm income of 23% and driving many farmers out of business.

Over the past five years, for example, New York State has lost 20 percent of its dairy farms.



## SENATOR O'MARA URGES ONGOING WORK TO EXAMINE BROADBAND DEVELOPMENT IN UPSTATE, RURAL NEW YORK

*Legislators look ahead to actions, investments in next Legislative Session to help accelerate development*

Senator O'Mara, who has long advocated state investment in rural broadband development, joined legislative colleagues at the capital in September for a public hearing on the development of broadband services in rural, upstate New York.

The joint Senate-Assembly hearing, co-sponsored by the Legislature's Commission on Rural Resources, drew legislators representing rural regions across upstate New York to the Legislative Office Building to hear testimony from rural broadband stakeholders representing individual communities, businesses and industries, family farms, government agencies, schools and public libraries, health care providers, emergency services, law enforcement, and many others.

Senator O'Mara said, "Access to high-speed Internet has become a fundamental need for our citizens, our businesses, our local economies, our first responders, our schools, and the overall success and strength of rural, local communities. We have worked to ensure that rural, upstate New York not be left behind in this mission to bring effective broadband to all New Yorkers, but new initiatives and investments are needed. This hearing will serve to refocus the Legislature's attention and I look forward to working with my colleagues to get this job done. There are some incredible local efforts underway making great strides to expand and improve our regional access. Ongoing state investment can help accelerate these badly needed expansions and truly ensure that broadband development across rural, upstate New York receives an equal



and fair commitment."

The issue remains critical to many of the rural communities Senator O'Mara represents throughout the State's 58<sup>th</sup> Senate District that encompasses all of Chemung, Schuyler, Steuben, and Yates counties, and a portion of Tompkins County (the City and Town of Ithaca, and the towns of Enfield, Newfield, and Ulysses).

The Senator said that while state government has made important strides through the New NY Broadband Program and other initiatives to bring high-speed broadband to rural areas, more steps need to be taken to accelerate the development.

He stressed that the recent hearing will help identify legislative priorities and set the stage for legislative action in the 2020 Legislative Session beginning in January.

## HORNELL MOTHER, TEACHER AND LIFELONG VOLUNTEER HONORED AS 2019 STATE SENATE 'WOMAN OF DISTINCTION'

*Pauline Holbrook represented Senator O'Mara's 58th District in the annual, statewide tribute*

In May, Senator O'Mara honored Pauline "Polly" Holbrook, a longtime stalwart of civic affairs in the City of Hornell and the Canisteo Valley, as his 2019 New York State Senate "Woman of Distinction."

The Senator solicits districtwide nominations for the annual tribute. Mrs. Holbrook represented the 58<sup>th</sup> District at the Senate's 21<sup>st</sup> Annual "Women of Distinction" awards ceremony in the Legislative Office Building in Albany. She was joined by family members and friends at this year's event (see photo), which paid tribute to more than 60 other honorees representing senatorial districts throughout New York State.

Senator O'Mara said, "Pauline Holbrook exemplifies a commitment to family, community and country that highlights her recognition this year as a 'Woman of Distinction.' From childhood, she was instilled with a strong sense of citizenship that she has passed on to her own family and that has guided her, for over six decades, to enjoy a remarkable standing within the Hornell community and across the Canisteo Valley. She has remained devoted to a life's work of raising her family and serving her community as a teacher, and a tireless and giving friend, neighbor and volunteer. It has been a life well-lived, and I was grateful for this opportunity to pay her a well-deserved and well-earned tribute of appreciation and gratitude."

Mike Palmesano, who nominated Mrs. Holbrook for this year's award, said, "When I first saw Senator O'Mara's nomination form, I

immediately thought of Pauline Holbrook. Her life's story of dedication and community service reads like a history book. As a veteran myself, I am especially proud to have nominated her for her service during World War II, promoting government war bonds. She is unparalleled in her service and dedication to our community and surrounding areas. Her long record of volunteering is most noteworthy. I am proud to have Mrs. Holbrook as a dear friend."



Read more about this year's Woman of Distinction tribute on [omara.nysenate.gov](http://omara.nysenate.gov).

If you or someone you know would like to submit a nomination for the Senate's 2020 "Women of Distinction" award, please request a nomination form from Senator O'Mara by email or mail:

- [omara@nysenate.gov](mailto:omara@nysenate.gov)
- Room 406, Legislative Office Building, Albany, NY 12247

## SENATOR O'MARA VISITS GARDNER ROAD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TO CELEBRATE AGRICULTURAL LITERACY WEEK

*Annual celebration seeks to raise awareness of the importance of farming and agriculture*

Senator O'Mara volunteered as a guest reader at the Gardner Road Elementary School in Horseheads as part of the school's celebration of Agricultural Literacy Week (March 18- 22).

"I truly enjoyed this opportunity to volunteer as a guest reader and help spread the word about the importance of agriculture and farming to these young students. They were great listeners and we're hopeful that this literacy week will help raise the awareness of agriculture and farming as a mainstay of New York State's culture and economy," said Senator O'Mara, a longtime agricultural advocate in the Legislature who has served as a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee.

The Senator visited the classrooms of Gardner Road teachers Christine Lawas and Michaelle Tillinghast.

Agricultural Literacy Week, sponsored by New York Agriculture in the Classroom ([www.agclassroom.org](http://www.agclassroom.org)), is an annual, weeklong event to help celebrate and raise awareness of the contributions of New York State's family farmers and the State's entire nationally leading agricultural industry.



This year's featured book was *On the Farm, At the Market*. According to New York Agriculture in the Classroom, this year's book "displays the unique markets and diversity that encompasses many aspects of New York's agriculture" and takes students "on the journey to local rural, suburban, and urban farmers' markets seeing a strong, interconnected community by following the food production and sales processes of three different farms."

## SENATOR O'MARA CALLS FOR DELAYING IMPLEMENTATION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE CHANGES SET TO TAKE EFFECT IN JANUARY

Throughout the 2019 Legislative Session, Senator O'Mara expressed opposition to a series of criminal justice reform actions, enacted last April as part of the 2019-2020 State Budget, set to take effect on January 1, 2020.

The Senator and many opponents – including law enforcement officers, county district attorneys, and others on the front lines of fighting crime in New York State – believe the approaching changes could endanger the safety of communities and neighborhoods across the state.

Now Senator O'Mara is co-sponsoring legislation (S6853) that would establish a one-year moratorium on any changes to New York's bail, discovery, and pretrial detention processes. Among other provisions, the approaching new laws eliminate cash bail and pretrial detention for nearly all misdemeanors and nonviolent felony cases. Beginning January 1st, some of the no-bail crimes for which defendants will no longer be detained will include criminally negligent homicide, aggravated assault on a child under 11, and selling drugs on or near school grounds.

The Senator said the one year delay he is seeking will afford the opportunity for more extensive public hearings to be held statewide.

Senator O'Mara attended a public hearing in Albany in late October where a number of local district attorneys, including Chemung County DA Weeden Wetmore, highlighted numerous concerns over the upcoming laws, including their ongoing ability to protect witnesses and a lack of resources to handle ever-increasing caseloads. Opponents believe that the new bail reform law will be another unfunded state mandate on localities and local property taxpayers.

"Where in the name of justice are we headed in New York State? These changes are far-reaching and will fundamentally redefine criminal justice," said Senator O'Mara, who serves as the ranking Republican member on the Senate Judiciary Committee. "Too many concerns are being raised by those on the front lines of law enforcement for these laws to go into effect without additional public hearings and local input."



*Senator O'Mara listens to testimony from local district attorneys at an October 28th public hearing on bail reform.*





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# Senator Thomas O'Mara

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## SENATOR O'MARA CALLS "COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT" A BIG VICTORY IN 2019

*Praises grassroots effort throughout the Finger Lakes and Southern Tier regions*

Senator O'Mara singled out the enactment of the "Finger Lakes Community Preservation Act" (S2270/A5029, Chapter 32 of the Laws of 2019) as one of the most important actions taken by the Legislature in 2019.

The new law, two years in the making and co-sponsored by Senator O'Mara, prevented the proposed Circular EnerG incinerator project at the former Seneca Army Depot in the town of Romulus in Seneca County from moving forward.

"I appreciated and welcomed the opportunity over the past two years to join Senator Pam Helming and many legislative colleagues to fight for the enactment of this critical law. The proposed trash incinerator stood as a serious threat to the quality, health, and overall safety of many communities throughout the Finger Lakes and Southern Tier regions. The action to stop it is a great credit to the environmental advocates, winery owners, farmers, business and community leaders, and every concerned citizen who worked together to lead the charge against it. It was an outstanding grassroots effort and a big victory in 2019," the Senator said.

The "Finger Lakes Community Preservation Act" prohibits the New York State Public Service Commission (PSC) and others from issuing a waste-to-energy permit for a proposed trash incinerator under specified conditions,

including if the proposed facility is within ten miles of a priority waterbody as designated by the State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

Opponents of the Circular EnerG project stressed that the incinerator would produce toxic ash from burning a range of solid wastes that can vary widely in chemical output, making compliance with emissions and toxic waste limits difficult. Siting a trash incinerator in the Finger Lakes region, with the associated impacts of air and ash pollution, would damage local tourism as well as the wine and agricultural industries.

Senator O'Mara and other opponents have also noted that the incinerator would have required the daily delivery of more than 2,500 tons of trash, transported by heavy trucks, across Southern Tier and Finger Lakes roadways and throughout area communities.

