



Dear Constituent:

First -- and most importantly as we move closer to the beginning of the 2019 Legislative Session in January -- I appreciate this opportunity to express my gratitude for your ongoing interest and participation in New York State government.

That's especially true when it comes to your input on so many of the common goals we share throughout the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions. During the past year, I have heard from thousands upon thousands of constituents who took the time through an e-mail, a letter, a phone call, or a community meeting to share concerns, ideas, opinions, and suggestions for better government.

This input makes all the difference. I can't do enough to encourage it.

Together with our regional representatives in the State Assembly, I look forward to attending community meetings and other local events throughout the year ahead. Additionally, at the beginning of 2019, I will once again offer my annual online legislative survey to make it as convenient as possible to share your input on some of the key issues facing us.

The point is this: It's time to get refocused on the economic, community development, public health and safety, environmental protection, and other challenges facing our region and state. Consequently, in the important days, weeks, and months to come, I will continue to do my best to keep you updated on state government actions and issues important to our communities.

In the following pages, I highlight several of the priority issues that I will be working to address in 2019.

Priority No. 1 in the next Legislative Session is to refocus on the fact that New York State's taxpayers and job creators continue to try to survive under one of America's heaviest mandate, tax, and regulatory burdens. We must undertake a significant and, in my view, unprecedented strategy to enact across-the-board tax cuts, eliminate unnecessary and unfair state regulations, and provide local property taxpayers and governments relief from unfunded state mandates.

Other priorities highlighted on the following pages are local roads and bridges, public safety, and water quality — all of which are fundamental to the long-term quality and strength of our region.

My very best wishes to you and your family throughout the rest of this holiday season and into the New Year.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



O'MARA PRIORITY 2019: PUBLIC SAFETY



In addition to his work as a member of the Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction, Senator O'Mara has also sponsored legislation to combat the resurgence of methamphetamine-related crimes locally and across New York State by significantly increasing the criminal penalties for manufacturing, selling, and possessing the illegal and highly addictive drug.

One piece of legislation (S2123) targets meth labs. It would increase the criminal penalties for the possession of meth manufacturing material and the unlawful manufacture of meth, implementing a series of increasingly severe felony offenses.

Senator O'Mara also sponsors the following meth-related legislation to:

- increase the criminal penalties for the possession and/or sale of the drug by implementing an increasingly severe set of felony offenses (S2824); and
- enhance the ability of local police and district attorneys to track and prosecute violations of restrictions on over-the-counter sales of cold medications that are key ingredients used in the manufacturing of methamphetamine (S1236, co-sponsored by Senator O'Mara).

Earlier this year, Senator O'Mara introduced legislation (S7673) targeting one of the worst dangers associated with clandestine meth labs: explosions and fires. The legislation calls for adding the crime of first degree arson, a Class A-1 felony punishable by up to 20 years in prison, to the list of charges that could be leveled against a meth cooker who causes a fire or an explosion that damages property or injures another person.

There have been increasing incidents of meth lab explosions and fires in recent years in Corning, Elmira, Elmira Heights, Hornell, and other areas. The crime of arson currently only covers intentional acts. Since explosions and fires involving meth labs are considered unintentional "accidents," cookers cannot be charged under New York's arson statutes. Senator O'Mara believes they should be.

He said, "Explosions and fires caused by meth labs have caused death, injuries, and extensive property damage across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions. The hazardous and toxic chemicals associated with these labs pose unacceptable risks to our neighborhoods and the public at large, as well as to the safety of police officers, firefighters, and other first responders. Our laws need to be as tough and as thorough as they can possibly be to try to deter and punish the irresponsible meth cookers who have no regard for the health and safety of the rest of us."

The Senate has consistently given strong, bipartisan support to many of Senator O'Mara's meth proposals over the past several years, but the measures have stalled in the Democrat-controlled Assembly. He said that they will be reintroduced for consideration during the 2019 Legislative Session.

O'MARA PRIORITY 2019: HIGHLIGHTING LOCAL ROADS AND BRIDGES

Over the past several years, Senator O'Mara and area Assemblyman Phil Palmesano have emerged as leaders in what has been a decades-long campaign to encourage a stronger state commitment to local roads and bridges.

They have worked to grow what has become a critical, bipartisan coalition of legislative colleagues, local highway superintendents and other leaders, and statewide transportation advocates to keep building support within the Legislature for a more fair, equitable, and stronger state commitment to local roads, bridges, and culverts.

Beginning with the 2013-14 State Budget, funding for the state's Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) has increased by more than \$200 million, or upwards of 40%. Additional funding for local roads is being delivered through a new PAVE-NY program. A new BRIDGE-NY program is providing aid for local bridge and culvert projects.



Combined, these programs provide significant funding increases for counties, cities, towns, and villages. Regionally, for example, total aid percentage increases from 2013 to this year have ranged from 45% to 55%.

However, the ongoing need remains undeniable: the state comptroller, for example, estimates that repairing locally owned bridges alone throughout New York State will cost upwards of \$28 billion.

Now more than ever, New York State must support a steady, strong, multi-year strategy to address local transportation infrastructure and help build a local transportation system that our communities, motorists, and taxpayers deserve.

O'MARA PRIORITY 2019: WATER QUALITY

Since 2015, as Chair of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee, Senator O'Mara has helped advance what has been widely recognized as one of the state's most significant eras of environmental conservation and protection.

Water quality has been a priority action. From supporting the full funding of the state's Environmental Protection Fund to fighting for the establishment of the Water Quality Infrastructure Improvement Act, Senator O'Mara has worked to ensure a stronger state commitment to local water quality across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, and statewide.



This fall, Senator O'Mara and his Finger Lakes colleague, Senator Pam Helming, held a Water Quality Forum in Yates County. Over the past several years, Senator O'Mara and Senator Helming have played key roles in developing a comprehensive series of Senate initiatives to combat invasive species, address flood control, respond to Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs), and improve drinking water safety and the overall quality of water infrastructure for all New Yorkers.

They were joined at the October forum at Starkey's Lookout in Dundee by a panel of water quality educators and experts, and agriculture and environmental advocates representing the Beacon Institute for Rivers and Estuaries, Cornell University, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Clarkson University, the Finger Lakes Institute, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, the New York Farm Bureau, the Keuka Lake Association, Seneca Lake Pure Waters, and regional Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

The group identified challenges and shared information, data, and resources. HABs, invasive species, non-point source pollution and other contaminants, flood and erosion control, habitat preservation, and water quality infrastructure highlighted the range of issues discussed by the panelists.

Senator O'Mara said, "We know that the issue of water quality is here to stay. These challenges and crises have dominated the Legislature's attention over the past several years during which I have served as Chair of the Environmental Conservation Committee. Water quality is one of the high priority challenges facing the future of the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions. From harmful algal blooms to invasive species, and from non-point source pollution to water quality infrastructure, how we understand and proactively respond to these concerns is fundamentally important. It is important for drinking water, the tourism economy, and the recreational use of lakes and other waterways. I greatly appreciate this opportunity with Senator Helming to welcome the participation of so many water quality experts, educators, and concerned citizens. Their input in the days, months and years ahead will make the difference."





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Online legislative survey will help kick off 2019 legislative session

When the new Legislative Session gets underway in January, attention turns again to the enormous economic, fiscal, and other challenges facing local counties, cities, towns and villages across New York State.

Consequently, Senator O'Mara will once again offer an online "Community and Legislative Survey" at the start of the New Year to encourage area residents to share their input on a range of the key issues facing the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, including local economic development and job creation, government reform, agriculture, education, environmental protection, health care, and many others.

The New Year survey will be posted on www.omara.nysenate.gov in early January.

CLICK TO SHARE YOUR VIEWS

Senator O'Mara's

"2019 Community and Legislative Survey"