

News from Senator George M. Borrello

57th Senate District

Representing Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, and portions of Livingston County

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SENATOR BORRELLO TOURS LAKE ERIE GRAPE BELT AS HARVEST SEASON PREPARES TO KICK OFF



Senator Borrello visited the Grape Discovery Center in Westfield to discuss the upcoming grape harvest and fall events. From left to right: Phil Baideme, President of the Concord Grape Belt Heritage Association Board of Directors; Senator Borrello and board members Bob Patterson and Jim Crolle.

WESTFIELD – Senator George Borrello, Ranking Member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, recently toured the Lake Erie Grape Belt region, which is preparing for the annual harvest of Concord grapes. There are approximately 30,000 acres of Concord grape vines in the Belt, making it the largest grape growing region in North America east of the Rocky Mountains.

“Both of my grandfathers were Concord grape farmers. Growing up watching them taught me the value of hard work and instilled in me boundless respect for anyone who chooses this demanding but rewarding way of life,” said Senator Borrello. “The industry has grown and changed tremendously since my grandfathers’ time, with many promising new market opportunities for the Concord in development and a thriving tourist season devoted to celebrating and enjoying the grape.”

“Enjoying the Grape Discovery Center is the ideal start to any visit to the region. The museum component is enhanced by a popular tasting room, which offers visitors a chance to sample many grape products, including wines from many of the more than 20 wineries located in the region. This is a wonderful time of year to visit the Grape Belt region to see the vineyards at their best and to enjoy festivals showcasing the wines and agricultural bounty of the area.”

Senator Borrello noted that significant investments of state funding have been directed towards research efforts to develop new Concord grape product lines and varieties in recent years. His advocacy on behalf of agriculture in this year’s state budget included support for Cornell’s Concord grape research, which received \$250,000, a \$50,000 increase over the Executive Budget proposal.

“Some of the most exciting research in agriculture is occurring around the Concord grape. Progress has been made in improving the grape’s versatility for table wines, which has the potential to open up new market opportunities,” said Senator Borrello. “Investments like these are key to keeping our agriculture industry strong and future-focused.”

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As part of his grape belt tour, Senator Borrello visited Growers Cooperative Grape Juice in Westfield and its processing plant. In business since 1929, Growers, which has 80 grower-owners, has been a supplier of bulk Concord grape juice and concentrate to juice, jelly and winery customers in the US and abroad. Growers participated in New York’s farm-to-food bank program, Nourish NY. Grape concentrates from the cooperative were provided to a food manufacturer/distributor for distribution to a New York City area food bank. This was equivalent of an estimated 80,000 servings of grape juice. From left: Steve Cockram, General Manager; Rick McKee, Operations Director, and Senator Borrello.