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ORTT AND COLLEAGUES CALL FOR MULTIPLE PUBLIC FORUMS OVER IMPENDING AG LEGISLATION

A press release from Senator Rob Ortt (R,C,I,Ref-North Tonawanda) and his colleagues calling for public forums across the state regarding proposed farm-worker unionization legislation.

Today, Senator Rob Ortt (R,C,I,Ref-North Tonawanda) and his colleagues in the Senate called for multiple public forums to be held in various rural communities so that residents may properly ask questions and voice their opinions regarding the Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act. The Act, which was proposed by Sen. Jessica Ramos of Queens, would make sweeping changes to the state's agriculture industry and allow seasonal, part-time workers to unionize, leading to higher labor costs for family farms.

Also joining Sen. Rob Ortt in calling for multiple public forums was Sen. Fred Akshar, Sen. Daphne Jordan, Sen. James L. Seward, Sen. Robert E. Antonacci, Sen. Patty Ritchie, Sen. Patrick M. Gallivan, Sen. Pam Helming, Sen. George A. Amedore, Jr., Sen. Chris Jacobs, Sen. Sue Serino, Sen. Thomas F. O'Mara, and Sen. Betty Little.

"Owning and running a successful farm in New York has become more difficult than ever before," said Sen. Ortt. "In the last five years, approximately 20 percent of New York's dairy farms have been forced to close their doors, and legislation like this bill could be the final nail in the coffin for countless more family-owned farms across our state. It is paramount that a thorough round of public forums is held from Niagara County to Suffolk so that those communities that will be impacted most by this legislation have their opportunity to let legislators know that they think."

In a study conducted by Farm Credit East, it is estimated that the Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act would add at least \$299 million of costs on the backs of New York's farming community, which would reduce net farm income by a staggering 23 percent.

Senator Pam Helming (R,C,I-Canandaigua) said, "Agriculture is the leading industry in the Wayne-Finger Lakes region. With the Farm Fair Labor Practices Act, farms simply will not be able to afford to operate and will eventually close their doors. After meeting with various farmers and agri-business owners, it is clear that this legislation not only significantly impacts our farmers, farm workers, and their families but also businesses, tourism, and consumers in our region and across New York State."

Senator Daphne Jordan (R,C,I,Ref-Halfmoon) said, “No farms, no food. It’s not just a saying; it’s a reality. The Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act should be renamed the Farm Foreclosure Act because it would put more of our hard-working family farmers out of business. At a time when so many family farms are struggling – especially our dairy farmers – we should be lowering their costs of doing business, not further burdening them with an Albany mandate increasing their expenses by \$299 million. This bill is bad for our economy, bad for consumers, bad for New York and bad for an important way of life and heritage that must be preserved and protected. Taxpayers across our state should have an opportunity to be heard on this issue and learn more about how the Senate Democratic Majority’s bill could drive up food prices and drive away more of the family farms that feed New York’s families.”

Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) said, "The misguided and misrepresented Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act poses an extreme action at a time of already severe economic struggle for New York State farmers. Worse, the Act’s consequences would produce a nightmare of a ripple effect across local communities in every region of this state and profoundly diminish the future of high quality, local food production."

Senator Patrick M. Gallivan (R,C,I-Elma) said, “Farmers across New York have legitimate concerns about this proposed legislation and the negative impact it will have on their small businesses. They deserve an opportunity to ask questions and to share their thoughts with their representatives. Many family farms are already struggling economically. We need to listen to their concerns and make sure we support them and the entire agriculture industry which is so vital to New York’s economy.”

Senator Fred Akshar (R,C,I-Endwell) said, "Before government goes charging ahead to implement more misguided policy with unintended, yet disastrous consequences, we need to listen to the people this proposal will hurt. I challenge our colleague from Queens to visit Upstate, visit our rural communities and listen to our struggling farmers and the agricultural workers they employ. Through regulation, taxes and lack of affordability, New York continues to drive farmers and their families out of business and out of our state. Let's do our due diligence beforehand and listen to the people this legislation will affect before piling yet another onerous burden on those struggling to survive in New York."

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