



**News from the New York State  
Legislative Commission on Rural Resources  
Senator George H. Winner, Jr., Chairman  
Assemblyman David Koon, Vice Chairman**

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**For Immediate Release**

**NEW LAW PAVES WAY FOR NATION'S FIRST  
'CENTER FOR RURAL SCHOOLS'**

*Winner-Lifton initiative could play key role in upstate revitalization*

Albany, N.Y., Legislation sponsored by State Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton (D/WF-Tompkins/Cortland) and State Senator George Winner (R-C-I, Elmira) establishing the nation's first legislatively created "Center for Rural Schools," has been signed into law by Governor David Paterson.

"We're making New York a national leader in its commitment to rural education," said Winner, chairman of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources. "If we're serious about strengthening upstate New York, we need to aggressively recognize that a rural school district can be a driving force for revitalization. It's an investment that we believe can produce significant returns for upstate communities and the upstate economy. The Center for Rural Schools can play a key role in any overall upstate revitalization strategy."

Lifton, who serves as a member on the commission, said, "The establishment of the Center for Rural Schools at Cornell dovetails perfectly with the school reforms and new funding coming from the state. These reforms will allow and encourage our schools to be more robust, productive centers for the whole community. That is especially crucial in rural areas, where the school is already at the hub of community life, but is often underutilized. The research and outreach from this new center will be critical in helping to actually implement those changes that are so necessary to the success of our schools and the revitalization of rural Upstate."

Under the new law, the "New York Center for Rural Schools" will be charged with exploring ways to expand the role of schools in rural communities by examining how schools can help address a variety of rural challenges, including poverty and population loss, particularly among young people.

"Rural schools have unique problems and issues. We at Cornell are very pleased, as part of our responsibility to the State of New York, to assist those schools with their special needs. Our faculty and the University are committed to working with rural communities and educators to maximize their success", stated Ronald Seeber, Vice Provost for Land Grant Affairs at Cornell University, where the new center will be housed.

"The Rural Schools Association of New York State is most appreciative of Senator Winner and Assemblywoman Lifton for continuing to recognize the needs of rural schools and rural communities. The Center will be a real asset in our efforts to support the educational opportunities for children attending the more than 400 rural schools of New York and we look forward to working with them as a partner", added Larry Kiley, Executive Director of the Association.

Winner and Lifton said that the new center builds on and broadens the work of the state's Rural Education Advisory Committee (REAC), which the Legislature created in 1990 to work with rural schools, communities, and state and local agencies to provide information and assistance on addressing issues unique to rural education.

"The Center will build upon the successes and networks of the NYS Rural Education Advisory Committee and the Rural Schools Association of NYS by facilitating debate and expertise, building capacity for data analysis, and sponsoring applied research to assist rural schools, their communities, and the state", stated Professor John Sipple, who will direct the new Center for Cornell. "The new Center will make Cornell a stronger partner in helping to improve rural schools, which are critical to the futures of rural children and to the prosperity and vitality of rural communities. It builds Cornell's



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capacity to reach out to the people of the state, to engage with rural communities, and to conduct and apply research with a public purpose”, added Steve Hamilton, Associate Provost for Outreach at Cornell.

The New York Farm Bureau worked as a partner in advancing the legislation that creates the new Center. “We appreciate the efforts by Senator Winner and Assemblywoman Lifton to strengthen the role of our rural schools: said Julie Suarez, Director of Public Policy at New York Farm Bureau. “Rural schools are a significant resource in many communities where farm families live. We are excited that the Center for Rural Schools is now in place to identify challenges to the economic well-being of our rural communities and aid local schools in overcoming those challenges”, Suarez continued.

The NYS Center for Rural Schools will be housed in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University, where a Department of Education has been in operation for many years, and is expected to attract substantial outside financial support to the state from the federal government and private foundations to advance the goals envisioned for the new Center.

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The Legislative Commission on Rural Resources is a joint-bipartisan agency in the state legislature. The chairman is Senator George H. Winner, Jr. (R-C-I Elmira), the vice-chairman is Assemblyman David Koon (D-Fairport). Other Commission members are Senator Mary Lou Rath (R-C, Amherst), Senator David J. Valesky (D-Oneida), Senator William T. Stachowski (D-Buffalo), Assemblywoman Barbara S. Lifton (D-WF Ithaca), Assemblyman James Bacalles (R-C, Corning), and Assemblyman Daniel J. Burling (R-I-C, Castile).