

Ag Assessment bill clears committee

By JOHN TAUZEL
nyjtauzel@fb.org

ALBANY — The Senate Agriculture Committee has moved quickly to address a proposed 34 percent increase in the 2007 agricultural assessment rates.

Unanimously passing a bill introduced by Sen. Joseph A. Griffo, R-Utica, the committee recognized the need for more stability in the agricultural assessment program.

The legislation now awaits a vote by the full Senate. Assemblyman Bill Magee is championing the issue in the State Assembly

and full expects to move the bill out of his committee to reach the full Assembly for a vote after the April Legislative Recess.

The proposed legislation would place a 10 percent cap on the year-to-year change of the agricultural assessment program.

This would address the situation that has occurred for the 2007 year where, due to a "perfect storm" of farm financial statistics, the rates are set to increase by 34 percent.

For the typical farm in New York of 200 acres, this means an immediate increase of almost \$500 in property taxes compared to

2006. Farms simply cannot absorb such a dramatic increase in the cost of doing business and New York Farm Bureau moved quickly to work with Griffo, Assemblyman Bill Magee, D-Nelson, chair of the Assembly Agriculture Committee, and agricultural property tax experts to put together a legislative solution to the issue.

The bill would impact the 2007 rates as well as all future agricultural assessment rates. Timing of the legislation is important since tax rolls generally need to be finalized by early July.