



# The Office of Legislator Al Krupski

## Suffolk County Legislator

### 1<sup>st</sup> District

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**Hauppauge, NY**

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## **Legislator Al Krupski Joins Members of the Agricultural Community in Denouncing Recent Court Ruling on SC Farmland Preservation Program**

Legislator Al Krupski joined Suffolk County officials, key members of the agricultural community, food bank representatives and farmland preservation specialists this afternoon to bring attention to the recent court decision which overturned some provisions of Chapter 8 of the Suffolk County Code which allowed for hardship exemptions and special permits for certain structures on preserved farmland.

“There is great diversity in agriculture and not everyone understands what is needed to operate a productive farm or agricultural operation,” said Legislator Krupski. “Agriculture is changing; different farming techniques, new technology and methods are emerging along with the opportunities they present; infrastructure needs may change. We need to adapt to accommodate these changes if we want to preserve agriculture and farming.”

In addition to the September 28, 2016 ruling, a permanent injunction was issued prohibiting the county from granting special permits and hardship exemptions, causing uncertainty and anxiety throughout the agricultural community.

John Halsey, president of the Peconic Land Trust, said his organization “is very concerned about the recent court ruling and its impact on our local, working farms so important to Long Island's jobs and tourist economy. Suffolk County’s landmark farmland protection program is about assuring the future of farming and agricultural production first and foremost. Of course, there are open space benefits related to working landscapes but they have never been intended to be at the expense of agriculture itself. Indeed, agricultural production by definition includes structures like barns, greenhouses, and deer fences. Such structures are essential to the business of farming and do not just benefit the farmer, but also the public, residents and visitors alike, who are afforded access to a wide variety of locally grown products including food, wine, and horticultural products. In short, agriculture is a central component of Long Island’s history and community character from which we all benefit. It is critically important that we do what is necessary to assure that agriculture remains viable and sustainable for the benefit of future generations.”

Mark Zaweski, a farmer from Riverhead who is also a member of the Suffolk County Farmland Committee, shares the PLT's concerns, stated "The recent court decision regarding the Chapter 8 lawsuit has far reaching consequences to the already burdened Suffolk County farmers. Equipment storage buildings, greenhouses to start young seedlings for early market sales as well high tunnels to prolong the growing season are of utmost importance in today's evolving agricultural industry. Fences to protect our crops as well as to maintain food safety are a necessity to grow anything here on Long Island due to the over whelming wildlife population. For equine and any animal production, shelters are required under law. But beyond all this, the economic impact in the reduction of land values is devastating. Most farmers use their land as collateral to borrow against to make capital improvements, purchase new equipment, or upgrades to stay in compliance with local, state and federal laws such as fuel tanks, spray pads, food safety requirements, etc. If these necessary things are no longer allowed farmers who have sold their development rights will have a difficult time continuing on and those that haven't will not even consider entering into the program which then leaves those farms for possible development into more homes and subdivisions. It is important the County defends the program and the agricultural industry which has a long history on Long Island going back to colonial times and continues to this day."

Suffolk County has filed a notice of appeal to overturn the decision and order. Legislator Krupski thanked County Executive Steve Bellone and the County Attorney for their action and for moving forward with the appellate process, but said he will be forming a committee to "lend clarity to the path ahead and to restore integrity to the Suffolk County Farmland Protection Program. We need the full commitment of the County Executive and Legislature to accomplish this very important task."

"Farmers are the good guys, the ones who voluntarily preserve their land", continued Legislator Krupski. We have plenty of "unprotected" land that is being preserved right now by virtue of it being actively farmed. These lands, over time, should be permanently protected for all time and for future generations."

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