

January 8, 2009 - Slaughter Urges Funding For Wine and Grape Foundating

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, January 8, 2009

Rep. Slaughter Urges Gov. Paterson to Continue Funding for NY Wine & Grape Foundation

Funding is critical to stimulate "essential sector of our agricultural economy across the state"

Washington, DC - Congresswoman Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Chairwoman of the House Committee on Rules, today called on New York Governor David Paterson to maintain funding for the New York Wine and Grape Foundation, a critical part of New York's economy, to next year's budget.

The full text of Congresswoman Slaughter's letter to Governor Paterson follows:

January 8, 2009

Governor David A. Paterson

Executive Chamber

State Capitol

Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Paterson:

I urge you to maintain level funding for the New York Wine & Grape Foundation (NYWGF) in the Fiscal Year 2009-2010 budget proposal.

I am greatly troubled by the decision to eliminate funding for the NYWGF in the Fiscal Year 2009-2010 budget proposal. Through my efforts in the State Legislature, New York created NYWGF in 1985 as a public-private partnership to enhance this vital industry through research and coordinated promotion and marketing efforts. The NYWGF's mission is to advance the New York wine grape and wine industry as a world leader in quality, productivity, and social responsibility.

The NYWGF's partnership with the state has taken this industry from economic crisis to being among the fastest growing areas in the agriculture and tourism sectors. As mentioned in Fred LeBrun's column "Squeeze Threatens State Wine Industry" in the January 7, 2009 publication of the Albany Times Union, almost 200 wineries have formed and prospered across the state since the Foundation's creation. Moreover, the \$3 million allocated in the FY2008-2009 budget for the Foundation returns \$3.4 billion to our state economy, and the state's support for the wine and grape industry returns over \$1,000 for every dollar invested. In my district, wineries have flourished across Erie, Orleans, Monroe and Niagara counties with the Foundation's support. It is clear that this small investment in our wine and grape industry helps stimulate this essential sector of our agricultural economy in an economically depressed area.

The proposal to eliminate funding for the NYWGF will result in the dissolution of the organization and its support of the New York grape and wine industry, and will cause irreparable damage to one of our strongest agricultural and tourism sectors. Given the dire outlook on the state's economy, I understand the difficult choices you must make for our budget. However, this proposal would be the first time since its creation that the foundation received no state support and would only serve to damage one of our state's true success stories.

I strongly urge you to continue the actions of past governors and fund the NYWGF. Failure to do so will result in extreme hardship for this vital sector of our state's agriculture and tourism industries.

Sincerely,

Louise M. Slaughter

Member of Congress

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