

# The Citizen

WHERE YOUR STORY LIVES

Wednesday, May 13, 2026

auburnpub.com

## BUSINESS

# NATIONAL EXPOSURE



ROBERT HARDING, THE CITIZEN

Auburn Leathercrafters owner Alan Dungey shows The Citizen one of the many dog collars made at the Auburn site.

## Auburn company featured on 'Fox & Friends Weekend'

**ROBERT HARDING**  
robert.harding@lee.net

A longtime Auburn company was featured on a national television show on Saturday.

Auburn Leathercrafters, represented by owner Al Dungey and his son, Chris, were highlighted during a Small Business Week segment on "Fox & Friends Weekend" on Fox News.

The four-minute segment focused on three small businesses, including Auburn Leathercrafters, which makes leather pet products, such as collars, leashes and toys. Some of the company's product line was displayed on the set.

Al Dungey provided an overview of Auburn Leathercrafters' history — it was founded by his grandfather in 1950 — and mentioned its use of primarily American-made materials. Chris Dungey added his perspective as the fourth generation to be involved with the family business.

In an interview on Monday, Al Dungey told The Citizen the opportunity to appear on "Fox & Friends Weekend" came after an Auburn Leathercrafters product — its combination harness leashes — was included in an email sent by Public Square, an online marketplace.

A Fox News producer saw the listing and contacted Auburn Leathercrafters. Dungey said they asked if the company could appear on an April 11 show, but that got canceled due to new developments in the war with Iran.

Fox News rescheduled the appearance for Saturday to mark Small Business Week.

Dungey said they traveled to New York City on Friday and spend the night there ahead of the morning show on Saturday. During the segment, "Fox & Friends Weekend" co-host Griff Jenkins mentioned Auburn Leathercrafters' website, auburndirect.com, and a Fox15 code to get 15% off a purchase.

The appearance has led to a bump in sales, according to Dungey. Shortly after the segment aired, there was interest from at least one wholesale customer.

Dungey welcomes the attention amid challenges in the pet product market. Smaller businesses like Auburn Leathercrafters are competing against Amazon and big box stores, such as Walmart. The larger retail stores, as well the online pet supplies retailer Chewy.com, are "killing these small independent retailers," Dungey said.

The Citizen featured Auburn

Leathercrafters in its 2024 series "Made in Auburn." Dungey discussed the same challenges then and how the company's business had shifted, with more of a focus on direct-to-consumer sales due to the loss of wholesale customers.

One of Auburn Leathercrafters' long-time customers was Agway, which had 600 stores until it closed in the late 1990s. Dungey told The Citizen in 2024 that the loss of Agway was a major blow to his company.

With fewer wholesale customers, Auburn Leathercrafters is gaining direct-to-consumer sales, but Dungey admitted it's not growing at the same rate as the losses. That's why the Fox News appearance could help. It might introduce new potential customers to the business.

"The exposure helps so we can continue to do what we do and try to get the word out," Dungey said.

For more information about Auburn Leathercrafters and its products, visit auburndirect.com.

Government reporter Robert Harding can be reached at (315) 282-2220 or robert.harding@lee.net. Follow him on X @RobertHarding.

## POLITICS

# Tenney endorses Buller to join her in Congress

**ROBERT HARDING**  
robert.harding@lee.net

U.S. Rep. Claudia Tenney wants Kailee Buller to join her in representing Cayuga County in Congress.

Tenney, R-Cleveland, endorsed the Auburn native Buller for the 22nd Congressional District seat. Buller is challenging U.S. Rep. John Mannion, a Democrat, in the five-county district that includes the city of Auburn and the southern half of Cayuga County.

All or parts of Cortland, Madison, Oneida and Onondaga counties are also in the district.

Tenney represents the neighboring 24th Congressional District that includes the northern half of Cayuga County.



Buller

In a video recorded at the future Micron site in Onondaga County, Tenney announced her "full and total endorsement" of Buller.

"She is going to be a fantastic partner and a fantastic representative for our community, especially with key projects like Micron that are going on here," Tenney said.

Buller is a former Trump administration official — she previously served as chief of staff to U.S. Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins — who left her job to return to Central New York and run for Congress.

Her supporters include other members of

New York's Republican congressional delegation, including U.S. Reps. Nick Langworthy and Michael Lawler.

Tenney's endorsement stands out because she represented parts of the 22nd district when she was in the Utica area. The location where Buller and Tenney announced the endorsement is also noteworthy because of Mannion's role in bringing Micron to Central New York. He ushered New York's Green CHIPS bill, which supports the Micron project, through the state Legislature.

Buller welcomes Tenney's support as she campaigns against Mannion in the 22nd district.

"Central New York has a once-in-a-generation opportunity in front of us with

Micron and the economic growth coming to our region, but families are struggling with rising costs, high taxes and an affordability crisis that's making it harder to get ahead," Buller said. "I'm running to make sure Central New York workers and families actually benefit from this moment — with better jobs, lower costs and leadership focused on results instead of political theater."

Political forecasters rate the 22nd district race as "solid Democrat," largely due to the Democratic enrollment advantage and Mannion's financial edge. Buller is hoping to win back the seat Republicans lost in 2024.

Government reporter Robert Harding can be reached at (315) 282-2220 or robert.harding@lee.net. Follow him on X @RobertHarding.