

Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

June 14, 2006

The Honorable James Douglas
Governor
State of Vermont
109 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05609

Dear Governor Douglas:

We read with interest that you are sending Secretary Kerr to Washington this week to offer your assistance to the Delegation's longstanding efforts to help Vermont dairy farmers. Our offices are pleased to meet with your staff and we are eager to learn about your plans to focus the State's resources on this critical situation.

For years the Vermont Congressional Delegation has worked in a bipartisan manner to enact legislation to assist Vermont dairy farmers. Under your predecessor, the Vermont Congressional Delegation worked with the State to pass and renew the Northeast Dairy Compact. When opposition from food processors, President Bush, Vice President Cheney, Tom Delay and other Congressional leaders made it impossible to renew the Compact again, the Delegation organized Members of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House from the Upper Midwest and the South -- regions that earlier had serious policy differences with each other and with our region -- to create the Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) program. This program so far has brought nearly \$50 million to family dairy farmers in Vermont.

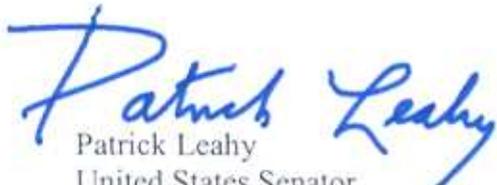
Last year the Delegation worked to secure the MILC program's renewal, but in a somewhat scaled-back version demanded by the President and the Republican Congressional leadership. This month, MILC payments are now \$1.00 per hundredweight. And we are working diligently in anticipation of the next Farm Bill to push to strengthen this safety net for family dairy farmers. In addition, the Delegation has secured or helped secure millions in federal funding for conservation, agro-tourism, dairy market loss payments, rural development grants and farm viability.

Most recently, the Delegation worked to include \$1.5 billion in emergency farm aid within the supplemental spending bill for the war in Iraq, which is in the final stages of moving through Congress now. Unfortunately the President issued a veto threat against the emergency farm aid, and along with his allies in the Congressional leadership, successfully stripped the funds that are now much needed for Vermont farmers from the bill.

We know that you value your relationship with President Bush, his advisors and his cabinet. In order to capitalize on your close association with the Bush Administration, it would help to our efforts if you and Secretary Kerr could convey your strongest disappointment with President Bush's opposition to emergency relief for our nation's farmers. You should consider urging the President to rescind his veto threat over these emergency farm aid funds. We feel that would be the most expedient way to provide needed relief for Vermont's agricultural economy.

Again, we look forward to meeting your staff in Washington and working together to bring some much-needed aid to Vermont's dairy farmers.

Sincerely,


Patrick Leahy
United States Senator


James Jeffords
United States Senator


Bernie Sanders
Member of Congress