

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 13, 2006

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing you about an urgent matter, namely, the plight of hardworking family dairy farmers in Vermont and across this country. In our strong view, immediate action is needed to prevent the loss of thousands of these farms nationwide.

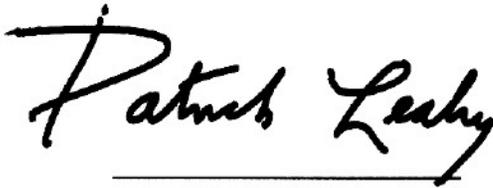
In the past six months, the farm price for milk has fallen 17%. The Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) program provides needed protection from these low prices. However, family farmers have experienced a significant increase in their production costs, especially the cost of fuel, which cannot be recovered through the MILC program. This combination of low prices and escalating costs is being made even worse by wet weather that is making it difficult for many, and impossible for some, to plant and harvest corn and hay for their herds.

Unfortunately, the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill that the Congress is considering this week contains no assistance for these farmers. The Senate-passed version of the legislation did include emergency agricultural assistance, including \$1.5 billion in assistance for producers nationwide to offset rising energy costs. In addition, the legislation would have provided nearly \$100 million in specialty crop block grants which would have been available to dairy farmers in Vermont battling low prices. This assistance would have played a critical role in responding to the needs of our farmers.

Unfortunately, the Senate-passed language was taken out in Conference Committee in response to your threat to veto the entire emergency supplemental appropriation bill if the aid to farmers was not removed. Your Administration should not choose to ignore the very real economic emergency that too many rural communities are suffering through.

We ask therefore that you reconsider your opposition to this emergency agriculture assistance. Although your veto threat has prevented assistance from being included in the current emergency supplemental appropriation bill, we strongly believe immediate assistance for hardworking family farmers is needed and we ask that you support our continuing efforts.

Sincerely,



Patrick Leahy
U.S. Senator



James Jeffords
U.S. Senator



Bernie Sanders
Member of Congress