

*Delegation Nets Quick Results In All-Out Push For Boost In Dairy Price Supports*

U.S. Senators Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) and Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), and Congressman Peter Welch (D-Vt.) Friday welcomed a U.S. Department of Agriculture decision to lift the floor price for dairy products.

The decision was announced two days after the Vermont senators and a coalition of more than two dozen senators from other dairy states met with Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. The meeting and the multi-region coalition of senators were organized by Leahy, the senior-most member of the Agriculture Committee, to seek a short-term hike in the price the federal government pays for milk and dairy products in the marketplace. Leahy and the coalition also followed through with an appeal to White House Budget Director Peter Orszag.

Leahy said, "Secretary Vilsack became our partner in getting this done, and we are grateful that dairy farmers have a true ally at USDA. Government dairy purchases are part of the overall safety net, but in this case we also want these purchases to be a catalyst to help stabilize the downward spiral in milk prices. Dairy farms in Vermont and across the nation are hurting, and this is the fastest and most direct short-term step that's available to stop the bleeding. We will continue to push for other relief but those steps will take longer."

Sanders said, "I appreciate the secretary's quick response to our request. This is a good start but much more needs to be done if Vermont dairy farmers are going to receive a fair price for their product. My office continues to look at all available options to raise milk prices for family-based dairy farms, including expanding the MILC program and investigating monopolistic practices in the dairy industry."

Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.), who also had urged the Administration to raise the dairy price floor, said, "Secretary Vilsack's decision is good news for dairy farmers and good news for Vermont. While it's clear that this is a short-term remedy and not a long-term solution to the crisis facing the dairy industry, this much-needed support for family farmers will help them weather the storm. I applaud Secretary Vilsack's action and I look forward to continuing the fight for Vermont's dairy farmers."