

The Vermont congressional delegation – Senator Patrick Leahy (D), Senator Bernie Sanders (I), and Congressman Peter Welch (D) -- announced Tuesday that Vermonter Harold J. Howrigan Jr. has been appointed to the National Dairy Promotion and Research Board by U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.

Howrigan, who is part of one of Vermont's most well-known farming families, lives in Fairfield. The Howrigan family own and operate H.J. and A. Howrigan and Sons, Inc. Howrigan fills the seat previously held by his sister Ellen Paradee as a member of the Board. Leahy, Sanders and Welch had written to Secretary Vilsack recommending Howrigan for the post.

The appointment comes at a crucial time as agriculture remains one of the strongest sectors of the economy, but volatile markets continue to roil dairy farmers and consumers with rollercoaster milk pricing. In March Howrigan met with Leahy and with other farmers to provide input on dairy program reforms. A new dairy risk management program drawing on that input is now being considered by the full Senate as part of the 2012 Farm Bill.

Leahy said, "I have known Harold and his family for years and have the greatest respect for the work that they do and for the integrity with which they approach farming in Vermont. I know that Harold will be an invaluable member of the Dairy Board and I am glad to have another Vermont voice contributing to the national conversation about dairy."

Sanders said, "Harold Howrigan knows the importance of dairy farmers investing in not only dairy promotion and advertising, but research and nutrition education as well. He'll use his common sense and dairy business experience to oversee these efforts on behalf of his fellow co-op members and farmers throughout the region."

Welch said, "Harold Howrigan comes from a multi-generation dairy farm family that has survived not only through hard work, but by running an efficient and innovative farm business. Harold is equally devoted to the industry and serves as a pragmatic advocate for his fellow dairy farmers. His experience and thoughtfulness will be invaluable to the National Dairy Board."

The Dairy Board was established in 1983 under the Dairy Production Stabilization Act. The

Board is tasked with developing and overseeing a coordinated program of promotion, research, and nutrition education. The Board works to design programs to strengthen the dairy industry's position in both domestic and foreign markets. It is overseen by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agriculture Marketing Service and is financed by a mandatory 15-cent per hundredweight assessment on all milk marketed commercially and a 7.5-cent per hundredweight assessment on milk and dairy products imported into the United States.

The Dairy Board has 38 members appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture and serving staggered three-year terms, with no member serving more than two consecutive terms. Each member of the Board represents one of 12 regions of the United States.