



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Darrel J. Aubertine

Aubertine Applauds Federal Legislation for Dairy Farmers

DARREL J. AUBERTINE March 26, 2009

Legislation from U.S. Sen. Feingold similar to bills introduced by Sen. Aubertine at state level

ALBANY (March 27, 2009)—State Sen. Darrel J. Aubertine today applauded U.S. Sen. Russ Feingold for introducing a series of legislation intended to give dairy farmers a say in decisions that affect their bottom line and help them get a fair price for their milk. Two of Sen. Feingold's bills are similar to legislation introduced by Sen. Aubertine in the state Legislature.

"I'm pleased to see that Sen. Feingold is helping to build momentum for our dairy farmers," Sen. Aubertine said. "In this economic downturn our farmers are struggling with low milk prices. They deserve a say in the policies that affect them and they deserve a fair price for their milk. These measures at both the state and federal levels would help farmers in both of these areas."

One bill would give individual farmers the right to vote on any referendum tied to a milk marketing order. Under current law, a farmer's cooperative is authorized to vote on behalf of the individual farmer. In some instances, cooperatives double as dairy processors and may cast votes on behalf of farmers that the individual farmer may feel benefits processors over the producer.

“All too often these votes take place to affect the milk marketing order and the farmer’s bottom line, but the farmer doesn’t even know it has happened, let alone have a say in it,” Sen. Aubertine said. “What we want to do at the very least is make sure that farmers are kept informed about decisions being made on their behalf. If they choose to let someone else vote for them, then that’s their choice, but I don’t think it’s the coop’s job to say we’re going to vote for you regardless.”

The second bill from Sen. Feingold of Wisconsin would prohibit any cheese made with dry milk protein concentrates or caseins from being labeled domestic natural cheese. Sen. Aubertine introduced similar legislation to prevent products enhanced with MPCs, casein or casienates other than what naturally occur from being labeled as “dairy.” The vast majority of MPCs used in the United States are dry imports produced without U.S. health and safety regulations that undercut the value of domestic fluid milk.

“Imported MPCs and caseins are still an issue of concern for dairy farmers, who have been among the hardest hit in this economic downturn,” Sen. Aubertine said. “This is an important issue for both consumers and farmers. These MPCs should not be treated as equal to the quality fluid milk produced by our farmers in Wisconsin, New York and throughout the country. Consumers should know the difference between cheese made with real domestic milk and what has been processed with dry MPCs.”