



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Bonacic

Bonacic Announces Agricultural Forum in Albany

JOHN J. BONACIC October 2, 2009

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October 2, 2009: Following up from a promise made at a Sullivan County agricultural forum, State Senator John Bonacic and Senator Catharine Young, the Ranking Member of the Senate Agriculture Committee will host a public forum in Albany on the Dairy Farming crisis, on October 19 starting at 10:00 AM.

Senator Bonacic noted that farming is a difficult job. “Farming is one of the hardest jobs in the State. When the weather is 20 degrees below 0 or 105 outside, the cows have to be tended to. You can’t plan a family vacation unless you have someone to take care of the farm animals. There is no rest, and constant work, and the product is something that every American counts on from birth to death. We cannot lose our family farms. Action by the State Legislature is needed.”

Farmers at the Sullivan County forum, held on September 24 in Jeffersonville, asked Bonacic to organize a public hearing at the Capitol to try and elevate their issues. Senator Bonacic has also taken a number of legislative steps to assist farmers:

- He suggested and ultimately won enactment of the Dairy Farm Assistance Program of 2006. That program provided direct assistance to dairy farmers based on the number of cattle they had.
- He authored New York’s farm worker housing law so that Dairy Farmers can have 0% loans to build quality housing for their farm workers. Previously Dairy Farmers were excluded from this program. “Hired help on farms must have access to safe and quality housing. If farm workers get sick it puts the entire farm operation and product at risk,” Senator Bonacic said.
- This year he and Senate Republicans offered an amendment to the budget to provide \$60 million in emergency aid to Dairy Farmers – which was defeated by Democrats on a 30 – 32 party line vote. Every Republican voted for it. Every Democrat in the Senate voted against it. Even after that, Governor Paterson directed \$200 million in aid as “bonuses” for welfare recipients.
- Senator Bonacic is currently co-sponsoring, with Senator Young, legislation to re-authorize the 2006 Dairy Assistance Program in the amount of \$75 million.

“One local paper noted that words are nice but what was needed was legislation to help our farmers. I agree. Legislation has been proposed. We now need the Democratic majorities in the Senate and Assembly to call a session and vote on the aid Senator Young and I are recommending,” Bonacic said.

The forum in Albany on October 19 is designed to raise the issues which concern New York State farmers, and try and force those in charge of State government to vote on solutions.

“As a result of the Sullivan County agricultural forum – sponsored by Cornell Cooperative Extension, and carried live on Thunder 102, farmers across New York will now have the opportunity to take their message to the State Capitol. Media from around the State will be invited to help spread the word in support of more farm aid. Those in charge of State government cannot claim ignorance of this important issue. We are taking our message statewide because the loss of family farms will mean more jobs would be lost and New Yorkers will pay more for dairy products.”

While oral testimony will be limited due to the expected Statewide interest, the forum is open to the public, and attendance is encouraged. Written testimony is not limited and can be submitted to Senator Bonacic, who will share that testimony with all Senate Agriculture Committee members. “Numbers speak. The more people, the greater the interest,” Bonacic noted. Anyone interested in more information or for directions to the forum should contact Senator Bonacic’s office at (845) 344 3311 or by email at SenatorJohnBonacic@gmail.com.

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