



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Darrel J. Aubertine

## Senate Passes Aubertine Legislation to Inform Dairy Farmers, Strengthen Individual Voice

DARREL J. AUBERTINE February 8, 2010

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ALBANY (February 8, 2010)—The New York State Senate today passed unanimously legislation sponsored by Sen. Darrel J. Aubertine, chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, to give dairy farmers a stronger individual voice in the policies that directly affect their business.

“This is really about giving farmers the opportunity to exercise their democratic rights,” said Sen. Aubertine. “Dairy farmers join co-ops to have a stronger collective voice, but as members in that co-op not every farmer will agree with the decisions made. Under the current arrangement, when amendments are made to federal or state milk orders, the co-op exercises bloc voting. With this bill, if individual producers

want to cast their own ballot separate from the co-op, they'll have that opportunity.”

The Senator's bill, S.1677-A, amends New York State Agriculture and Markets law to authorize the Commissioner of Agriculture & Markets to notify individual farmers in the event of proposed changes to milk marketing agreements and/or orders. Farmers then will be able to opt out of the bloc voting system in which the cooperative casts an aggregate ballot, to cast an individual ballot on federal referendums, on federal milk marketing orders, and on state-administered orders (Western New York).

While bloc voting can be a useful tool under certain circumstances, this procedure basically serves as a time saving means and is not always in the best interest of individual producers. Bloc voting essentially eliminates a dairy farmer's right to exercise his or her conscience in opposition to his or her cooperative.

“This bill will keep every dairy producer up to speed on the changes that are being proposed,” Sen. Aubertine added. “It's a great step in the right direction toward opening up the system.”