

*Vermont Delegation Performs Traditional 'Milk Toast' As Renewal Of The MILC Program's Charter Finally Becomes Law*

*□ Senate Joins House In Overriding President's Veto Of The Farm Bill*

Washington, DC - Capping months of effort by the Vermont Congressional Delegation, the MILC Program - the basic safety net for dairy farmers when milk prices plummet - became law Thursday afternoon when the U.S. Senate joined the U.S. House of Representatives in overriding President Bush's veto of a new 5-year Farm Bill.

The Vermont Congressional Delegation - Sen. Patrick Leahy (D), Sen. Bernie Sanders (I) and Rep. Peter Welch (D) - toasted the victory in the U.S. Capitol with champagne glasses of milk, a tradition that has accompanied the Delegation's earlier victories on the MILC Program and on its predecessor program, the Northeast Dairy Compact.

The extension and expansion of the MILC Program, including a new "feed cost adjuster" that for the first time will also take into account dairy farmers' rising production costs, was engineered in the Senate Agriculture Committee by Leahy, and Sanders and Welch worked closely with Leahy in building a bipartisan and multi-regional coalition of support for the plan.

Though the MILC Program's section of the Farm Bill is now law, the unrelated trade policy section may face a re-vote, after an enrolling snafu inadvertently dropped the trade title from the version of the Farm Bill vetoed by the President.

Leahy said, "This is a milestone moment for several key Vermont priorities, from our dairy farms to our community food pantries to cleaning up Lake Champlain. The dairy safety net is secure and it's stronger than before, and that will help Vermont's farmers plan for the future."

Sanders said, "At a time when family farmers are struggling, and the cost of grain and fuel is soaring, this is enormously important. Not only is this a step forward for family farmers in

Vermont and around this country, but a huge step forward for nutrition and addressing the growing hunger problems in America. I thank Senator Leahy for his work on the Agriculture Committee."

Welch said, "The MILC provision becoming law is a major win for Vermont and provides a critical safety net for our farmers. Our delegation's commitment and teamwork to secure this dairy provision has paid off."