



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
MASSACHUSETTS SENATE
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053

Senator Stan Rosenberg, President Pro Tem
Hampshire and Franklin District
Room 320
617.722-1532
Fax: 617.722.1062

District Office
1 Prince St.
Northampton, MA 01060
413.584.1649
Fax: 413.582.0113

Stan.Rosenberg@state.ma.us

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CONTACT: Tom Mitchell
413-587-6289

SENATE APPROVES DAIRY FARM BILL

LEGISLATION BASED ON ROSENBERG'S WORK ON DAIRY FARM REVITALIZATION TASK FORCE

State Senator Stan Rosenberg (D-Amherst) announced today that the Senate has approved a bill based on his work with State Sen. Michael Knapik (R-Westfield) on the Dairy Farm Revitalization Task Force, and with State Sen. Stephen Brewer (D-Barre) in the Senate, that would implement a number of programs to promote and improve the dairy farm industry in Massachusetts.

"I am pleased with the spirit of partnership and sense of urgency that has guided this process," Rosenberg said. "Dairy farming is an important part of our way of life, especially in western Mass., and the programs in this bill will help safeguard the industry."

"This industry has historically been a vital part of our economy," said Knapik. "The Dairy Task Force has developed a strategic plan to maintain the viability and profitability of this industry in the future."

"I am thrilled that my colleagues have recognized the need to provide solutions for long term sustainability for our dairy farmers in the Commonwealth, and I believe that we are getting closer to accomplishing our key objective," said Senator Brewer, Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means. "I have been working with farmers since July 2006 to secure supplemental funding and to ensure that the dairy farms, and agriculture as a whole, continue to be a part of the Massachusetts economy. I am pleased to be a part of this effort and I look forward to working with my colleagues to continue assisting the farming community."

The bill approved today would:

- **Implement Rosenberg’s proposal to allow cities and towns to opt out of collecting local excise taxes on farm equipment and other items.**
- **Allocate up to \$50 million to establish a Dairy Farm Promotion Fund to provide loans and technical assistance to dairy farmers.**
- **Create a Massachusetts Dairy Promotion Board**, which would redirect funds currently contributed by Massachusetts farmers to a regional board to develop promotional, research, and nutritional programs and put these funds to work for the Massachusetts dairy industry. Agricultural tourism and international trade are also identified as options worth exploring for Massachusetts dairy farmers, along with renewable energy opportunities such as anaerobic methane digesters, biocrops and biofuels, and wind energy, which would cut production costs and create new products.
- **Establish a state-qualified milk promotion and research program.**
- **Promote the use of renewable energy technologies** by calling on the Massachusetts Division of Energy Resources, the Massachusetts Renewable Energy Trust, and other entities to increase their outreach and assistance to Massachusetts dairy and other farmers to explore ways the Commonwealth’s agricultural industry could make use of renewable energy technologies in order to reduce production costs and develop new products.

The bill also directs the state to make use of funds Massachusetts farmers are required by Federal Dairy Promotion and Research Order to contribute for national dairy promotion research activities. Dairy farmers have the option of contributing up to 10 cents of a required 15 cents per hundred pounds of milk produced to a qualified state or regional program for state or regional promotion and research. Many Massachusetts dairy farmers contribute to the New England Dairy and Food Council, which is qualified regional program.