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HOUSE PANEL TAKES TESTIMONY ON NORTHEAST DAIRY COMPACT

Rep. Bernard Sanders (I-VT) today testified before the Subcommittee on Administrative Law and Governmental Relations of the House Judiciary Committee in support of the Northeast Dairy Compact. Sanders is an original cosponsor of the measure and has actively lobbied his colleagues in support of the Northeast Dairy Compact bill. The Subcommittee was originally scheduled to mark-up the Compact but last minute lobbying by dairy processors led to a postponement of consideration.

Sanders said, "I am outraged that large dairy processors have managed to slow this bill down. Vermont's dairy farmers cannot survive if they do not receive a fair price for their milk. Needless to say, my disappointment is shared by my New England colleagues, Democrats and Republicans alike, with whom I have been working to secure passage of the Northeast Dairy Compact."

The Northeast Dairy Compact will allow the New England states to regulate the price paid to farmers for milk that will ultimately be consumed in fluid form. It is opposed by large dairy processors who have taken advantage of high consumer prices and low farm prices.

In his testimony before the subcommittee Sanders noted, "Unfortunately, while farmers have been severely hurt by low prices, consumers have not benefitted. When milk prices to farmers plummeted by some 30% during the 1980s, the consumer price remained constant and in some cases even went up. Obviously, those in the marketing chain between farmers and consumers reaped large profits. That is why some large processors are opposed to this proposal. They could care less if the rural economies of Vermont or Massachusetts or Wisconsin or Texas fall apart."

Future action on the bill is not expected until after the August recess.

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