

New Congressional Dairy Farmer Caucus Launched

New Coalition of Lawmakers to Help Address Dairy Producer Issues on Capitol Hill

The new congressional Dairy Farmer Caucus, the formation of which was announced in early April on Capitol Hill, will help focus legislators' attention on major policy issues in Congress affecting dairy producers, according to the National Milk Producers Federation.

The purpose of the Dairy Farmer Caucus is to provide a bipartisan forum, involving both House and Senate members, to collaborate on policy issues that address issues of interest to dairy producers nationwide.

The Dairy Farmer Caucus is being co-chaired by Senators Arlen Specter (R-PA) and Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) on the Senate side, and by Representatives Devin Nunes (R-CA), Collin Peterson (D-MN), Rick Larsen (D-WA), and Randy Kuhl (R-NY) on the House side. The Chairs will now be seeking other members of the Senate

and House to join the caucus, to get active in dairy issues from both a producer and consumer standpoint.

"It's high time that the second-largest farm commodity in the U.S. has its own caucus to contribute to the process of discussing and developing legislative policy in Washington," said Charles Beckendorf, NMPF's Chairman, and a dairy producer in Tomball, TX. "Dairy products have been produced in the U.S. since the Pilgrims brought cows with them from England nearly 400 years ago, and today we have dairy farms in each of the 50 states. The caucus will help America's 65,000 dairy farmers better communicate with their congressional representatives, while giving senators and congressmen a better platform for them to reach out to their constituents."

The need to establish a dairy farmer caucus is particularly acute in light of the fact that Congress will begin writing the next Farm Bill in the coming year, according to Beckendorf.

"When our elected officials have opportunities to discuss and collaborate on major policy issues, ranging from economic safety nets to animal health to trade, it makes it easier to build a consensus both within the dairy producer community, and also in the halls of Congress," Beckendorf said. "We hope this Caucus will help us communicate to government agencies such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Food and Drug Administration, the U.S. Trade Representative, and others, about the concerns of dairy producers regarding potential policies affecting them."

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