



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Seward & Lopez Make Plea For Struggling Farmers

JAMES L. SEWARD August 3, 2009

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ONEONTA, 07/31/09 -- State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I – Oneonta) and Assemblyman Pete Lopez (R/C/I – Schoharie) are calling on the governor to release a minimum of \$60 million in federal stimulus funds to save New York farms.

“Milk prices are dropping and many of our dairy farmers are at the brink of financial disaster,” said Senator Seward. **“We need to take immediate steps to protect our number one industry, or many small family run farmers will be forced out of business.”**

Seward and Lopez have written the governor, asking him to appropriate a minimum of \$60 million in unclaimed American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) money to assist farmers in the short term.

“While Washington bailed out AIG and other Wall Street businesses and provided hundreds of millions in increased social services funding, dairy farmers across the nation and right here in New York state continued to suffer,” said Assemblyman Lopez. “Many dairy farmers are literally selling the farm. Something needs to be done in order to protect this vital industry.”

Seward and Lopez met with dairy farmers and other agribusiness leaders in Schoharie County recently and heard their plight first hand. Dairy farmers in New York received an average of \$11.50 per hundredweight of milk sold during June, down 40 cents from May and \$7.40 below June a year ago. A study by Cornell University estimated that farmers need to be paid at least \$17.00 per hundredweight in order to meet their production costs.

In 2006, Seward and Lopez led the fight to create the Dairy Investment Act which provided \$30 million in immediate financial assistance to struggling farmers. The funds served as a lifeline to New York’s dairy farmers, and helped stabilize other sectors of the upstate economy dependent on agriculture.

“The price farmers are receiving for their milk has dropped to 1970s levels, while taxes, fuel prices and other production costs have skyrocketed,” Seward added. **“I am encouraged by federal proposals under consideration to fix the archaic milk pricing system, but if we don’t take action now, many of our farmers won’t be around to experience the changes.”**