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JOINT RESOLUTION MEMORIALIZING THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO AMEND THE FEDERAL ORDER SYSTEM TO ENSURE THAT MAINE DAIRY FARMERS WILL RECEIVE A SUSTAINABLE PRICE FOR THEIR MILK

WE, your Memorialists, the Members of the One Hundred and Twenty-fourth Legislature of the State of Maine now assembled in the First Regular Session, most respectfully present and petition the United States Congress as follows:

WHEREAS, the Maine dairy industry retains its ability to provide for the beverage milk consumption requirements of the people of the State, with more than sufficient in-state milk production and in-state processing capacity; and

WHEREAS, one of the lessons of 9/11, and an enduring lesson of increased energy costs, is an awareness of the importance of the security of and the availability of access to a reliable local supply of fresh staple food and food products and having access to that local supply is also now a consumer preference; and

WHEREAS, maintaining a viable Maine dairy industry is in the State's broader economic interest, as the industry comprises the State's largest agricultural sector and is among the State's top employers, contributing \$57,000,000 to the State's economy and providing 4,000 jobs with a direct payroll of \$150,000,000 each year; and

WHEREAS, the State's 330 family-run dairy farms maintain stewardship over 700,000 acres of land and are of pivotal importance to the State's largest industry, tourism, and have a broad impact on every county and community throughout the State; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of the health, economic and social importance of the nation's dairy industry and the importance of maintaining stable supplies of locally produced fresh milk, a long-standing federal regulatory program has been in place for the express purpose of setting minimum producer prices sufficient to ensure adequate supplies of fresh milk for each of the regional population centers of the country; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Government has further supported the availability of locally produced and supplied fresh milk and dairy products through a series of food nutrition programs, including the Women, Infants and Children Special Supplemental Nutrition Program of the United States Child Nutrition Act of 1966; and

WHEREAS, recent operation of the federal milk pricing program largely ignores the regional character of the nation's primary fluid milk markets, including the different regional costs of production that exist for the diverse dairy farmers who supply their local markets; and

WHEREAS, this deficient operation of the federal system is increasingly causing profound distress for the dairy industry, leading to the virtual decimation of the nation's southeastern local milk

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supply and causing distress to those rural economies and communities of the region dependent on the dairy industry; and

WHEREAS, similar to the disturbing negative trend that has taken place in the southeastern United States, New England has experienced a loss of 75% of its dairy farms since 1980 and almost a 50% reduction in milk production in Massachusetts and Connecticut since 1995, so that Massachusetts and Connecticut are almost completely dependent on the dwindling numbers of neighboring producers for their supplies of raw milk; and

WHEREAS, the developing dependence of the southern New England states on out-of-state producers for their raw milk supplies raises a warning for other states in the region; and

WHEREAS, recognizing the broad and substantial threat to the public interest caused by the failure of the national program, the State in 2003 created a dairy stabilization subsidy for the Maine Milk Pool to ensure the continued viability of the State's dairy industry, with all its attendant benefits; and

WHEREAS, this program has largely replaced the federal program to set minimum producer prices sufficient to provide a livable wage for the State's dairy farmers and thereby ensure an adequate supply of locally produced milk for the State's citizenry for the long term, including those served by operation of supplemental nutrition programs; and

WHEREAS, the administration of this state program comes at a great expense to the State, even prior to the current profound economic distress; and

WHEREAS, given the enduring regional character of the nation's beverage milk industry, the Federal Government should not abdicate its responsibility to sustain the continued viability of dairy farming across all the regions of the United States to ensure consumers of adequate, local supplies of pure and wholesome milk, including local supplies of milk necessary for effective operation of the nation's supplemental food nutrition programs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED: That We, your Memorialists, respectfully urge and request that the United States Congress consider the unique success of the state program to ensure the continued viability of the State's dairy industry against the increasingly defective operation of the federal milk pricing program; and be it further

RESOLVED: That We urge and petition the United States Congress to take all action necessary to accomplish comprehensive reform of the federal milk market system, to restore that program's function of ensuring the sustainability of regional dairy farming across the United States and the ability of local dairy farmers to provide their neighbor consumers with adequate supplies of pure and wholesome milk and their further ability long term to provide the supplies of fresh milk necessary for effective operation of the nation's supplemental food nutrition programs; and be it further

RESOLVED: That suitable copies of this resolution, duly authenticated by the Secretary of State, be transmitted to the Honorable Barack H. Obama, President of the United States, to the President of the United States Senate, to the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, to each Member of the United States Congress who sits as chair on the United States Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry and on the United States House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture, to the United States Secretary of Agriculture and to each Member of the Maine Congressional Delegation.