Dear Madam Secretary:

On October 19, 2001, your Department initiated a comment period on the Recommended Decision on Class III and Class IV Pricing Formulas issued in the October 19 Federal Register.

As one who has been directly involved with the dairy industry for nearly 30 years, I have been a strong advocate of increased prices for dairy farmers and have been guided by the principle that, without dairy farmers, there would be no industry. Accordingly, my inclination is to support actions that provide our farmers with higher milk checks.

I have, however, recently heard from experts in the field, whose views I respect, expressing concern that the proposal will place Northeast cheese manufacturers in an uncompetitive position, particularly with respect to California manufacturers. As we both know, Madam Secretary, there is another truism in the dairy industry – without a cheesemaking industry in the Northeast, the need for our dairy farmers will decrease proportionately.

Therefore, I respectfully encourage you to review the Recommended Decision carefully to ensure that all businesses and farms are treated equitably under these rules. Putting any region of our country out of the dairy business, particularly through government action, is a result I hope neither you nor the Department believe is good for the industry or the nation as a whole.

I appreciate your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely yours,

John M. McHugh
Member of Congress
Date: January 24, 2002

To: Chris Sarcone, Dir. Congressional Affairs

From: Judi Brewer

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Comments:

Chris, if your office can handle getting this to the Sec'y's o/c, we would appreciate it. Call above # if any questions.