

JUSTICE FOR FARMWORKERS



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NEWS RELEASE

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On Dairy Day, jaw-dropping hypocrisy

After denying farmworkers freedom of association, Agriculture Committee Chair forwards a bill that would protect dairy farm owners'...freedom of association

Allies today begin a daily vigil for farmworker justice, in witness to the New York Senate's ongoing withholding of fundamental labor rights from farmworkers. They plan to hold vigil each day, awaiting Senate action.

Meanwhile, in stark contradiction to his opposition to freedom of association for farmworkers, Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Aubertine has received approval from that committee for a "Dairy Farmers' Bill of Rights." According to the sponsor's memo, "The purpose of this bill is to provide dairy farmers with protection from milk dealers who engage in interference with the farmers' right to join or remain in an association of producers [for the purpose of collective bargaining] or to remain an independent producer."

The Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act (S.7787) would grant farmworkers on the largest 4% of New York farms protection from their employers who would interfere with their right to organize. In response to concern from farm growers, the bill further stipulates that any strike that workers undertake would require 21 days notice.

Dairy workers on a recent conference call reported working 12-14 hour days, six days a week, for the past three years without any vacation. Unlike their white coworkers, who work much fewer hours and perform lighter duties, the immigrant workers receive no bonus, no vacation, and no health insurance. The only thing the immigrant workers are treated to is name-calling and disrespect from their supervisor. The workers, who requested to remain anonymous, said that if they had the right to organize, they would be able to present their grievances to the owner, with less fear of losing their jobs.

Justice for Farmworkers Campaign spokesman Jordan Wells said of today's Dairy Day festivities, "Today's Dairy Day refreshments taste salty with the sweat of New York's farmworkers, who are denied even the most fundamental protections."

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For more information: <http://justiceforfarmworkers.org/index.html> and <http://www.labor-religion.org/farmworkers-updates.htm>