



JIM DOYLE
GOVERNOR
STATE OF WISCONSIN

May 19, 2010

TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE SENATE:

I am vetoing 2009 Wisconsin Senate Bill 434 in its entirety. I commend the Legislature for their thoughtful consideration of this issue, but the public health community has been nearly unanimous in their opposition to this proposal. I cannot ignore the potential harmful health effects of consuming unpasteurized milk that have been raised by many groups, including: the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Wisconsin Public Health Association, the Wisconsin Association of Local Health Departments and Boards, the Wisconsin Academy of Family Physicians, the Wisconsin Medical Society, Marshfield Clinic, Gundersen Lutheran and the Wisconsin Veterinary Medical Association.

The sale of unpasteurized milk has become an increasingly contentious issue in Wisconsin and around the country. I recognize that there are strong feelings on both sides of this matter, but I must side with public health and the safety of the dairy industry. Therefore, I am vetoing this bill.

Farmers who sell unpasteurized milk under the bill would be required to test the milk monthly and if pathogens are found, the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection could suspend a farmer's registration. However, these monthly tests would not be enough to ensure that all of the farmer's milk is free from harmful contaminants. This could result in serious illness or even death. Other states that allow the sale of raw milk have had to strengthen standards that are stricter than those in the bill following outbreaks of illness from drinking unpasteurized milk. The State of California requires a more comprehensive testing approach than what is contained in this bill. Their testing regimen quantifies coliform bacteria, a broad group of organisms that includes some types of pathogens, but also provides an overall indication of the hygiene level of the milk. This bill does not contain adequate testing requirements to ensure the safety of the public when consuming unpasteurized milk.

The dairy industry is the centerpiece of Wisconsin agriculture. We have worked successfully over the last seven years to modernize Wisconsin's dairy industry. An outbreak of disease from consumption of unpasteurized milk could damage the state's reputation for providing good, healthy dairy products, and hurt sales of pasteurized milk and other dairy products, resulting in significant financial loss for the entire dairy industry at a time when dairy farmers are already suffering.

I recognize that there has been thoughtful and spirited discussion of this issue from proponents and opponents of the bill. The hard work of legislators in crafting this bill is to be commended. However, significant questions must be answered and improvements should be made, particularly in strengthening testing requirements of unpasteurized milk, before enacting this type of legislation. In January 2010 the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection created a Raw Milk Working Group comprised of a wide array of stakeholders and experts charged with reviewing the legal and regulatory framework that might allow for the sale of unpasteurized milk to consumers without compromising public health. I believe the Working Group should be allowed to complete its analysis prior to making changes to the legal framework surrounding unpasteurized milk.

I believe this veto is the right decision to protect the health and safety of Wisconsin citizens.

Respectfully submitted,

JIM DOYLE
Governor