

HB 2358 Oppose

Dear Chairman Holvey and Committee Members,

We, as a County Farm Bureau Board of Directors have assembled a list of reasons on why we oppose this bill. Below are some of the facts that explain why Ag has different work conditions than other industries and this proposed "overtime" rule is not practicable for our farming membership.

- As farmers, we are price takers, which means that we cannot simply increase the sale price of our crops to account for this proposed added labor costs. Consumers set our prices and will buy from other states or countries that sell at a cheaper price. As farmers we will have to absorb any added overhead. That's the economic reality that we deal with every day.
- Our ability to make a profit is compromised by the weather, fires, economic conditions, pandemics and availability of reliable work force.
- It takes a loyal group of employees that we are blessed to have and pay extra to work on the farm(s) and work in sometime bitter cold, windy conditions.
- Many farmers in Josephine County have been farming for generations. The challenges of a farmer's life are getting more burdensome. The profit margins are slimmer, and to add overtime pay is one more reason to not have younger generations wanting to farm.
- Why should Oregon remove the longtime federal exemption for agriculture from overtime? Oregon can barely compete now with other states with our high labor costs. Once the "ag" market is destroyed by "ag overtime" you won't bring it back. This isn't an experiment that can be undone.
- Why hinder an agriculture economy that has an annual farm gate value of \$5+ billion and an overall added value economic footprint of \$28.9 billion which is 15% of the Oregon economy and 12% of the jobs. Ag in Oregon is a huge traded sector. 75-80% of the ag production leaves the state and 40% goes offshore, bringing new money into the state and nation.
- Farming is a lifestyle with long hard-working days, which we as farmers enjoy. The days offer a new task each day and do not fit a fixed work-shift mentality; change the water, feed the livestock morning and nights, spray when the wind is not blowing, repair broken farm machinery, battle the pests and weeds, and comply with the continued changes with regulatory rules.

These are just some of the reasons that mandatory "Ag Overtime" will have an extremely negative effect on Farmers in Josephine County, and the entire state of Oregon. Agriculture is a huge part of Oregon's past, present and future. A state without Agriculture is a state dependent on others for their food, fiber and fuel.

Sincerely,

Rhett Nelsen

Vice Chair

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