

Submitter: Janice Flegel

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Business and Labor

Measure: HB4002

On our family farm in Crook County we grow hay, wheat and carrot seed we have 3 employees, one of whom works year-round on my operation. I want to share with you my concerns about the impact of an ag overtime mandate on my operation and employees. Some of our employees are high school and college students who will be hurt by Ag overtime because we will be forced to limit their hours as our ability to pay overtime is not possible because of the small margins we are working with.

Implementing overtime at 40 hours will be difficult if not impossible for us to implement as producers. The market doesn't give me the ability to demand a higher price for beef, hay or wheat because Oregon increases labor costs. Costs for feed, fuel and supplies are skyrocketing. Labor costs come straight from the bottom line at a time when many farms and ranches are struggling to stay afloat. An inflexible 40-hour overtime mandate simply won't work for our industry.

Many employees, particularly those who work with cattle or sheep on the range, choose to work in solitude in remote areas where on-duty time and off-duty time is harder to calculate. Federal law already exempts those principally involved in "range work," because it's such a poor fit for traditional wage and hour requirements. It doesn't make sense to craft a one-size-fits-all policy that will immediately shutter sectors of Oregon agriculture.

At a 40-hour overtime threshold, workers risk losing shifts, total hours and take-home pay. In addition, the new labor costs might cause trade-offs for current benefits like insurance and housing. With increasing labor costs, many producers simply may not be able to continue providing these additional benefits to their workers. Agricultural overtime could have dire consequences for the families who depend on ranches and dairies for their income.

Please oppose a 40-hour overtime mandate for Oregon agriculture. It won't work for livestock producers. Our needs aren't seasonal, and imposing new costs at this difficult time will sacrifice our local, family-owned dairies, livestock operations, and range operations.