



Local 7901

AFL-CIO

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2-8-22

To: House Committee on Business and Labor
From: A.J. Mendoza, CWA Local 7901 president
Re: Support for Farmworker Overtime

Hello Chair Holvey, Vice Chairs Bonham and Grayber,
and Members of the House Business and Labor Committee,

My name is A.J. Mendoza, and I serve as the elected president of the Communications Workers of America Local 7901. Our Union represents nearly 700 working people across Oregon and Washington at telecommunications companies, labor organizations, 501(c)3 nonprofits, and banks - and I am writing in my capacity as a Representative of the Union to voice CWA Local 7901's strong support for farmworker overtime.

Farmworkers should receive fair compensation for every hour worked over 40 - full stop.

This is not a complicated proposition - nor should it be one that takes 5-years to implement - where the proposed language in HB 4002 sits. To our shame Oregon now stands as the only state on the West Coast to provide an allowance to the wealthy whereby they can extract even more value from an already exploited workforce.

Overtime pay when working in excess of 40 hours a week is a protection the majority of workers in the US have enjoyed since the early part of the 20th century. Oregon should be leading the way on workers' rights - but at present this simply cannot be said. Oregon must now follow the leadership of states which, through legislative prerogative, secured overtime pay for farmworkers, such as California and Washington, and lead once again.

CWA Local 7901 notes with regret the racism that dominated the Labor movement when decisions to exclude farmworkers from the overwhelming majority of US Labor Law were made. It must be said and accounted for that those decisions represent among the most despicable and shameful moments of the Labor movement's shared past. Across the campaigns and the work we take on as a Union we endeavor to always remember that - no matter what manifestation it may appear in - racism is a true enemy of the working class.

This is back on the agenda in 2022 because of a breathtaking failure of leadership in 2021. Again, the proposition is simply to treat farmworkers as humanely as we treat workers in every other industry. We are asking you to join with us to end this appalling conception of farmworkers as a categorically disposable class of sub-workers who are fine to wait for basic decency until the most convenient time relative to election cycles. This is the time - now - to do right by a historically undervalued part of Oregon's workforce who have endured indignity and inhumanity for decades.

It is a moral imperative for organized Labor to speak out whenever workers are being exploited because an injury to one is an injury to all. The horrific extent of the exploitation suffered by farmworkers in the status quo is made plain in the drastically higher rates of specific and severe health problems compared to other working Oregonians - such disparities have no excuse.

CWA Local 7901 holds that all working people deserve dignity - and we urge you to use the power you hold as elected officials to prioritize farmworker overtime in the 2022 Legislative Session.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'AJM'.

A.J. Mendoza (He/him)
CWA Local 7901 president