

Submitter: Ron Wells

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Business and Labor

Measure: HB4002

I own a small farm in Hood River County. I oppose mandating overtime pay in the agriculture sector. I spent a career in the military; we used to have a saying that some things "brief well"--the implication being that while some things sound good to say (or hear), they're not accurate. That goes for this bill. The idea "briefs well." Intuitively it's so unfair that poor farm workers don't get paid overtime, right? Truth is, they are paid as well as possible; we pay at or over \$15/hr. We value our workers as colleagues and friends. Farm work is seasonal and has tremendous flux in demand for labor. During harvest, for example, more than 40 hours of work per week might be required to bring in a time-sensitive and perishable crop. But in the dead of winter, hours might come nowhere close to full time. This isn't mean; it's the reality of an industry based on cyclical biology. Averaged out, farm workers are NOT being overworked in terms of hours. And studies show that bills such as this do not increase take-home pay for farm workers. So let's not embark on yet another perhaps well-intentioned but totally misguided legislative adventure that will do nothing but increase headaches for the already-marginalized Oregon farmer. Unless of course you want to be dependent on China for our food supply too.