

Submitter: Sharon Waterman
On Behalf Of: Oppose HB 4002
Committee: Joint Committee On Farm Worker Overtime
Measure: HB4002

My husband and I are currently retiring from our livestock operation and our son is now taking over. It is tough starting a new business and I want to share with you some concerns about the impact of an ag overtime mandate on future generations of ranch and farm families.

Livestock operations have unique needs. Cows, sheep and other livestock can rely on 24-hour supervision and response during lambing and calving season depending on the operation. During harvest (hay season), we have a limited amount of time to get the job done sometimes requiring more than 8 hours a work day. We need a flexible workforce during seasonable work times of the year.. Implementing HB 4002, an overtime mandate at 40 hours, will be difficult if not impossible for livestock producers who run a different operation than ours. Many ranch operations use range riders, herders, as well as other full time employees. The market doesn't give ranchers the ability to demand a higher price for beef or milk simply 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 many livestock operations.. While we appreciate the range exemption contained in HB 4002A, not all livestock operations solely have animals on the range. Operations such as ours feed during the winter, work the livestock in corrals, barns, etc., and must have a seasonal workforce to harvest hay for winter feed. Many will go to more automation in their harvesting techniques. It is something we have considered these last few years. That would create less jobs.

At a 40-hour overtime threshold, we see an adverse impact of workers risk losing shifts, total hours and take-home pay. It is obvious with overtime pay, there will be additional costs for employee taxes and insurance.

A tax credit is not a workable or durable solution to farmers paying for overtime. Tax credits will be phased out as soon as a recession hits, cannot be enacted in perpetuity, and, as crafted, phase down when growers will need them most. We need a workable and durable solution that can only be found by adjusting the structure of the overtime proposal to account for the seasonal and year-round needs of the agriculture industry.

Please oppose a 40-hour overtime mandate for Oregon agriculture under HB 4002. It won't work for livestock producers. Ranchers needs may or may not be seasonal, and imposing new costs at this difficult time will impact local, family-owned dairies,

livestock operations, and range operations in other areas of Oregon..