

Submitter: Jason Scharf  
On Behalf Of: Scharf Farms Inc  
Committee: House Committee On Business and Labor  
Measure: HB4002

Scharf Farms is a 4th generation farm in Polk County, and we can trace our family farming roots in the county back to the 1840's. We grow an average of 10 different crops annually including grass seed, nuts and wine grapes as well as run a seed cleaning facility. We employ 6 year around employees, one of whom has been here for over 40 years and one over 30, and as many as 24 total during the busy season, many of whom come back year after year after year. Apparently, our employees do not feel they are under compensated to have stuck around this long and/or keep returning. We are however, concerned about the impact that HB 4002, the ag overtime proposal, would have on our farm and employees.

At one time our farm employed many more people, mostly seasonal, including several local high school kids in the summer. However, over the years, more and more regulations, including raising minimum wage requirements, led us to cut back. We were able to cut back by eliminating some crops we had grown or, for the most part, mechanizing the jobs that had been done. Moving irrigation pipe by hand was replaced by automated systems, leaf pulling in the vineyard; automated, hanging wire in the vineyard; automated, hand labor intensive field crops; eliminated, grape harvest itself; automated. We are currently looking at automating our seed cleaner which would eliminate up to 3 jobs. All of this because of required regulation and wages that have ALREADY been implemented.

We do not hire employees at minimum wage. We challenge you to find a farm that does. Or can. Our starting wage is roughly 20% above the minimum. This is for someone that has zero skill and often may not read or write.

A quick computation of hours and wages paid during our last pay period showed that under a 40-hour overtime rule, we would have had approximately 200 hours of overtime. This is an average time of year, certainly not the busiest. What we found was with overtime, that would have been equal wages to one employee. As has been stated over and over, farmers can not make price on products for the most part. We get paid what the buyer is going to pay us. We can only pay so many people. This means we would likely need to eliminate one position. At this time of year, one person is almost 10% of our workforce. This simply will not work. The jobs still need done, but the money won't necessarily be there for wages. Fuel, fertilizer and other inputs have been skyrocketing lately, the added cost of overtime wages will be another nail in the coffin of many farms who won't simply be able to automate tasks that can be, or wait for technology to catch up to ones that can't be currently. Either way, we see jobs going away. Who wants to tell the one guy he's losing his job so the

others can have overtime?

Thank you for your time  
Jason and Justin Scharf,  
Scharf Farms, Inc.  
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