

Submitter: Clinton Carlson
On Behalf Of: Clinton Carlson
Committee: House Committee On Business and Labor
Measure: HB4002

House Committee on Business and Labor

I farm wheat in Morrow County. Usually, I employ two individuals during wheat harvest. I am concerned about the impact that "Agriculture Overtime" would have on my farm and my neighbors. As a wheat farmer, I cannot increase the sale price of my crops when labor costs increase. Consumers in the global commodity market set our prices. Mandating overtime after 40-hours demands wages that are not possible with the economics of agriculture. These will result in reduced pay and opportunities for farm employees. Since I cannot pass on increased costs, I will be forced to limit the number of hours that my employees work to 40 hours per week and/or run a split shift or reduce the wages to avoid the added expense of overtime pay. Farmers have been clear about the consequences of this policy. We are concerned that farm employees will see their paychecks reduced or jobs cut if overtime pay is required after 40-hours. Policy makers are always talking about saving the "family farm" and denouncing the evil "corporate farms". This bill will harm the family farm and the larger "corporate farms," which may also be family farms, just on a larger scale. Small farms are not set up with I.T. and H.R. to adjust to the new laws efficiently and may just elect to not employ workers. Larger farms will adjust by cutting hours, wages, benefits, and implement more shift work to continue on. However, the employees will ultimately suffer with less work and less wages in their pocket.

Only seven states have adopted "Agriculture Overtime" policies. Most have crafted policies to ensure some measure of flexibility to ensure that local farms can remain viable, and that employees' jobs and paychecks are protected. Several states have adopted policies to meet seasonal needs, and others established higher overtime thresholds that help avoid some of the worst consequences. Failure to provide flexibility that acknowledges the needs for agricultural production risks the sustainability of thousands of family farms, ranches, and crop production. It places farmworkers at a disadvantage. I believe this would have the opposite effect of what is intended.

As someone who stands to incur significant losses due to this bill, I urge you to oppose HB 4002. As written, this would create an inflexible 40-hour overtime mandate that simply won't work for Oregon's farms.

Sincerely,
Clinton R. Carlson
Morrow County Wheat Farmer
Immediate Past President

Oregon Wheat Growers League