

To Oregon Representatives regarding HB 2548

I am a small family farmer with about 40 acres. I am also employed by a large farming operation.

I write today to protest what I see as an attempt to legislatively mandate the forced, statewide unionization of agricultural workers. The attempt to create this Agriculture Workforce Labor Standards Board is a solution in search of a problem. As farmers we are very concerned about the well-being of our workers. In recent history we as an agriculture industry have participated in the formation of many new regulations, through the legislative process, that go further than previous regulations to protect workers and provide fair compensation. HB 2548 attempts to circumvent this process and gives the proposed board unprecedented power to make new regulations, provide training to meet the new regulations and participate in enforcement of their regulations. Rule makers, Judge and Jury all wrapped up in one board. Today the -2 amendment made it clear that the proponents want to minimize involvement by the agriculture employers by stacking the deck with board members that will completely favor one side AND can financially benefit from the increased regulations they could create as board members. The composition of the proposed board will have the majority of the board having no direct experience with the work they would be regulating. The people that will be directly affected by the regulations have been minimized and the proposed board now consists of bureaucrats and benefactors, a clear sign to the real intent of this legislation.

Also, it would serve well for the proponents to review the definition of the word "redundant". Then review the document submitted by Jenny Dresler in the testimony and is referenced as on behalf of Existing Worker Protections FAQ. I have reviewed most of the written testimony submitted by and on behalf of supporters of HB 2548. Of the concerns and complaints from these supporters I am hard pressed to find ANY of the issues that are not already addressed by current and recently added regulations. The document above details just that, providing citations of existing regulations that cover all the issues supporters are presenting as justification for the need of this board.

Why are Agriculture workers being singled out? Why not workers in other industries; construction, landscapers, janitors, bank tellers?

In the world we are in currently, there is a lot of focus on getting waste out of the federal government. There is disagreement on how that should be handled, and for the record how it's being handled now, is not the way. However, even detractors of the current administration's efforts generally agree that there is waste in government that should be addressed. So, with all the focus on government waste, this is how Oregon responds, by adding unnecessary and redundant legislation, bureaucracy and regulations.

This is not a party issue; this is an Oregonian issue. As Oregonians we expect OUR Legislature to work on the behalf of ALL Oregonians.

Where will all the agriculture workers work, when all the farms are gone?

Thank you for your time.

Ken Johnston