



May 8, 2009

There were several labor and employment-related measures that continued to progress through the legislative process:

[AB 854](#), (Juan Arambula, D-Fresno), which would require a Farm Labor Contractor to certify there are no court judgments or Labor Commissioner orders related to unpaid wages against him or her when seeking renewal of his or her state FLC license. The Assembly Appropriations Committee placed AB 854 on the suspension calendar, along with other fiscal bills, for consideration later this month.

[AB 1288](#), (Paul Fong, D-Mountain View), which would prohibit counties, cities or other local governmental entities from requiring use of the seriously flawed federal E-Verify program as a condition of obtaining a contract or business license or settling any claim of unlawful activity was passed by the Assembly Labor and Employment Committee with bi-partisan support with a vote of 6 to 1 on May 6. A broad coalition of labor and employer groups, including Farm Bureau, support AB 1288

[SB 356](#), (Rod Wright, D-Inglewood), which would require regulatory agencies to actively seek input from small businesses before publishing a notice of proposed action. The bill would also require agencies to affirmatively consider less burdensome alternatives to regulatory actions. SB 356 is supported by Farm Bureau and is scheduled for consideration by the Senate Appropriations Committee on May 11.

[SB 789](#) (Darrell Steinberg, D-Sacramento), the “card check” amendments to the Agricultural Labor Relations Act, was passed from the Assembly Labor and Employment Committee to the Assembly Appropriations Committee on a party-line vote of 5 to 2 on May 6. Farm Bureau and a broad coalition of business and agriculture oppose SB 789.

The Senate Local Government Committee approved [SB 715](#) (Lois Wolk, D-Davis), a bill portrayed by its author as a Williamson Act “reform” measure. Prior to the vote, at Farm Bureau’s request, the committee extracted a commitment by the author to remove the newly proposed income survey designed by the county boards of supervisors to “verify continuous agricultural income.” Farm Bureau testified that giving county boards of supervisors and city councils new unbridled authority to annually pry into the finances of Williamson Act participants was unfair and unnecessary. Existing law already allows the county assessors to send income questionnaires to participating Williamson Act landowners to assist the assessors in determining the use value of the land for property tax purposes.

Prior to the hearing, Senator Wolk also agreed not to shorten the period of time that landowners may continue to receive the use valuation if they protest a city or county nonrenewal of their contract. Under current law, landowners are entitled to three additional years of the Williamson Act's property tax benefits if they file a written protest to a notice of nonrenewal by a city or county. Farm Bureau will continue to work with the author and the sponsors of the bill, Yolo County, to address the consequences of not returning the assessors' questionnaires.

[SB 144](#) (Fran Pavley, D-Santa Monica) was put on the Senate Appropriations Committee suspense file this week. This bill would require mitigation and fees for any conversions of forestland in California to address the impacts these conversions have on climate change. This bill would apply not only to timberland, but oak woodlands as well. Farm Bureau is opposed to SB 144 because of cost issues and its duplicative nature; the state already requires mitigation for oak woodland conversions. However, the author and sponsors have expressed interest in providing incentives to keep forestlands as working landscapes and we will continue discussing these options. The Senate Appropriations Committee will take up the suspense file at the end of the month.

[SB 121](#) (Jeff Denham, R-Merced) passed the Senate Floor this week on a 35-0 vote. This bill will extend the sunset of the Central Coast Rural Crime Prevention Program until 2011 unless voters pass Proposition 1A on the May 19th Special Election Ballot, in which case the program will be extended to 2013. The program is currently scheduled to expire July 1, 2010. This is an important program that allows law enforcement to focus on rural crimes and has dramatically improved theft recovery rates for items stolen from farms and ranches. Farm Bureau is sponsoring SB 121.