



June 14, 2013

June 15 is the deadline for passage of a state budget. The overall budget has been passed by both houses of the legislature on party line votes. At this writing the legislature is working through passage of more than 20 budget trailer bills that are part of the overall package. All voting will be completed by tomorrow and the legislature plans to meet tomorrow for that purpose. CFBF has been working on various aspects of the budget, but we will wait until all budget related voting has been complete and then report on the state's 2013-14 spending plan next week.

AB 1165 (Nancy Skinner, D-Berkeley changes current law so that abatement of a serious, willful, or repeated violation of a Cal/OSHA standard, or a failure to abate a prior violation cannot be delayed by an appeal of the citation by the employer. It passed the Senate Labor and Industrial Relations Committee and was subsequently re-referred to the Senate Appropriation Committee. Farm Bureau and other employer groups oppose.

SB 25 (Senate President Pro-Tem Darrell Steinberg D-Sacramento) that expands mandatory mediation for agricultural labor negotiations failed passage in the Assembly Labor and Employment Committee. SB 25 would expand mandatory mediation for labor agreement negotiations where the parties cannot reach agreement to all future negotiations as well as initial negotiations after a union wins representation rights. It would also impose unionization on unsuspecting agricultural employees years or even decades after an initial vote certification and could create the situation that the newly unionized employees never voted for the union. Fresno grape and tree fruit producer Dan Gerawan testified forcefully against SB 25, questioning why his employees should be forced to pay 3% of their wages to a union that gave up trying to represent them 20 years ago, and why his employees are not allowed to participate in or even witness the mediation process UFW is using under present law to force a contract on Gerawan and his employees. Only Committee Chairman Roger Hernandez and Assembly Members Chau and Gomez voted in favor of the measure with Assembly Members Morrell and Gorell voting against the bill and members Alejo and Holden not voting. Chairman Hernandez granted the bill reconsideration. SB 25 will likely be later scheduled for another vote.

AB 841 (Norma Torres, D-Pomona) that requires junk dealers and recyclers to pay for all nonferrous metal purchases by check passed out of the Senate Business, Professions, and Economic Development Committee. This bill is intended to eliminate cash purchases to prevent the theft of metal as a way of obtaining quick cash. Farm Bureau attempted to require all payments be made by check in Farm Bureau's sponsored metal theft bill, AB 844 (Tom Berryhill, R-Fremont) in 2008. However there was, and remains, significant opposition on this point from the recyclers. Despite the recyclers' opposition, the bill passed 8-0. Farm Bureau supports this bill, which now goes to the Senate Floor.

The Wildlife Resources Committee of the Fish and Game Commission met this week to discuss amendments to regulations governing predator hunting and control. The committee is made up of two members of the Commission, Jack Baylis and Jim Kellogg. The purpose of the committee is to provide a public forum for more in-depth discussion of issues that may be brought before the Commission. This provides for more discussion than the three minutes given to public speakers during Commission hearings.

This was the first meeting of this new committee and was attended by animal rights groups and wildlife advocates requesting that the Commission act to control the “needless destruction of predators.” Farm Bureau participated in the meeting to remind the Commission of the impact predators have on California’s livestock producers. This issue will be discussed over the coming year by the Wildlife Resources Committee. The Committee can make recommendations to the full Commission, and should the Commission decide to act upon any recommendations those actions would take place during a public Commission hearing. Farm Bureau will continue to participate as these discussions continue with the next meeting planned for September.

AB 1394 (Assembly Committee on Insurance) would authorize the State Compensation Insurance Fund (SCIF) to have four additional exempt positions. In addition it establishes SCIF as a quasi-state agency for the purpose of transacting workers' compensation insurance both competitively in the market and as the insurer of last resort for California businesses that require coverage but cannot obtain that coverage from private insurers. AB 1394 will be heard in the Senate Insurance Committee on June 26. Farm Bureau supports.

AB 763 (Joan Buchanan, D-Alamo) will designate the Department of Boating and Waterways as the lead agency to work in cooperation with other agencies for the control of invasive aquatic plants in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Early detection and rapid response is essential for the treatment, control and eventual eradication of any invasive species. Aggressive aquatic plants have already greatly impacted the health of this important water system. The recent amendments provided clear policy that will give the Department of Boating and Waterways, along with the cooperation of other agencies, the necessary authority to prevent further damaging spread of invasive aquatic plants in the Delta, its tributaries and the Suisun Marsh. AB 763 will be heard in the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee on June 25. Farm Bureau supports.