LAWCHA
The Labor and Working-Class History Association

Add Your Signature to a Letter from LAWCHA Members against Weakened Farmworker Protection in the Farm Bill

Posted on November 22, 2013 by Rosemary Feurer

Section 10008 would add to the discrimination against farmworkers in labor law by requiring the Department of Labor (DOL) to consult with the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) when it seeks to enforce wage and hour protections for farmworkers.

Please see the following letter we are gathering signatures for regarding the weakening of farmworker protection in the Farm Bill (HR 2642). Letter by Cindy Hahamovitch, LAWCHA member, and Bruce Goldstein, of Farmworker Justice.

We need your signatures! To add your name, please sign the petition at Change.org, To Oppose Section 10008 of the House Farm Bill (HR 2642), Weakening Labor Protections for Farmworkers.

Rep. Suzan DelBene, Washington-01
Rep. Gloria Negrete McLeod, California-35
Rep. Marcia Fudge, Ohio-11
Sen. Debbie Stabenow, Michigan
Sen. Tom Harkin, Iowa
Sen. Sherrod Brown, Ohio

We, the members of the Labor and Working Class History Association, write to express our strong opposition to Section 10008, “Department of Agriculture consultation regarding enforcement of certain labor law provisions,” in the House Farm bill, the Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2013, HR 2642. Section 10008 would add to the discrimination against farmworkers in labor law by requiring the Department of Labor (DOL) to consult with the US Department

© LAWCHA. All Rights Reserved.

of Agriculture (USDA) regarding use of the “hot goods” injunction with agricultural commodities.

The “hot goods” injunction is a particularly valuable tool for agriculture, where there are high levels of wage violations and other abuses. The availability of a “hot goods” injunction can help ensure a prompt and effective remedy for wage violations suffered by low-wage workers who are least able to afford the loss of income. Because farmworkers often migrate and may not be in an area for long, the “hot goods” injunction is a particularly important tool to ensure that workers receive the wages they are owed. Further, the “hot goods” injunction ensures equity among growers by preventing unfair competition by employers that are able to charge lower prices or achieve higher profits than their law-abiding competitors. The “hot goods” injunction is a powerful tool for ensuring compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act.

We are concerned that Sec. 10008 sets a troubling precedent of requiring DOL to consult with the USDA when it seeks to enforce wage and hour protections for farmworkers. Numerous other federal agencies address issues regarding various other sectors of the economy; yet DOL is not required to confer with these agencies in its enforcement of the FLSA. The discrimination in labor law protections against farmworkers should be removed, not extended.

We hope you will vote against Section 10008.

Author

-
  Rosemary Feurer

  Rosemary Feurer is Professor of History at Northern Illinois University. She is the author of *Radical Unionism in the Midwest, 1900-1950,* among other books and essays. She is working on The Illinois Mine Wars, 1860-1940 and a new biography of Mary Harris "Mother" Jones.

© LAWCHA. All Rights Reserved.