



Veterans Day is Sunday!

November 9, 2007

AgJOBS won't fit into Farm Bill, but push for it continues

AgJOBS, (S-340) the temporary worker program legislation, will not be presented as part of the federal Farm Bill in the U.S. Senate, but it still may have a chance for action by the Senate.

This week, Sen. Dianne Feinstein did not proceed with plans to offer the AgJOBS as an amendment to the federal Farm Bill, currently being debated in Congress. Saying "this fight is not over," Sen. Feinstein said she will try again in coming months to gain passage of the temporary worker program.

The U.S. Senate failed to pass comprehensive immigration reform – including Ag JOBS-- earlier this year, but Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid had promised Sen. Feinstein he would allow AgJOBS back to the Senate floor for debate and a vote this year after Sen. Feinstein presented a similar case in July.

Sen. Feinstein said AgJOBS will help farmers hire a stable, reliable workforce and she plans to renew her efforts to pass it this winter or early next year. Sen. Feinstein has asked Majority Leader Harry Reid for floor time designated for the consideration of AgJOBS. She indicated that if there is another legislative vehicle that is a viable option, she will move AgJOBS as an amendment.

"When we started this effort, we knew it was an uphill battle because immigration reform is such a hot button issue. But we knew that it was critical for the U.S. agriculture industry to pass this bill, and we knew that a majority of Members in the Senate supports AgJOBS," said Sen. Feinstein.

"We know that we can win this. A broad bipartisan coalition of members believes AgJOBS is a necessary solution to the crisis being faced by the agricultural industry. But in this session, unfortunately, you need more than broad support – you need the right time and opportunity to line up as well," the Senator added.

At Wednesday's Annual Agribusiness Conference, agricultural lobbyist Monte Lake said there is a "reasonable chance" to get AgJOBS passed by spring. Both Lake and Luawanna Hallstrom, a

south coast vegetable producer and immigration reform advocate, urged conference attendees to contact their senators to thank them for support of AgJOBS and to be vigilant in making the industry's needs for a guest worker program be known among the policy makers.

Lake said the opportunity to move AgJOBS is within the next six weeks or early next year. Otherwise, he added, "We won't see a solution until 2009."

As drafted, AgJOBS streamlines the H-2A program to provide a future labor safety net while strengthening worker protections. It also allows the existing, trained and trusted, but improperly documented, workforce to rehabilitate their status, undergo thorough background checks and continue working in agriculture under a temporary status for a period of three-to-five years before being able to qualify to seek legal residency subject to conditions.

Business Conference highlights

The California Agricultural Issues and Outlook 26th Annual Agribusiness Management Conference on Wednesday delivered an ample amount of news on several front-burner issues affecting agriculture. For the most part though, the news was not always positive.

Starting off with economist Steven A. Wood's update on the present downturn in the housing market and credit crunch, conference participants heard about continued uncertainty expected with water supply, immigration reform and proposed air quality regulations. Here's some of what was said:

- *On the economy:* "The present housing situation can't cause a recession by itself. But, there is concern with impacts on consumer spending and what that can mean for the economy." Steven A. Wood
- *On water:* "The current water crisis makes the energy crisis of years past pale in comparison. Since 1992, 1.2 million acre-feet of water historically used for agriculture is now rededicated to environmental uses." Tom Birmingham,

Westlands Water District general manager

- *On water:* "We need a new approach to [environmental] regulations, and I say that as an environmentalist. We need to find opportunities for economic and environmental benefits and move away from only enforcement. We need new smart regulations that apply the concept of net environmental benefit, focusing on the broader benefits." Allen Dusault, program director of Sustainable Agriculture.
- *On Immigration:* "Twelve years ago, agricultural groups came together to form a coalition to ask for a solution [for a guest worker program]. Congress has fumbled and hasn't done it yet." Monte B. Lake, partner, McGuiness, Norris & Williams, LLP
- *On Air Quality:* "The next focus [on NOx emissions] is on the big three: off-road equipment [construction equipment], on-road truck and ag tractors." Roger Isom, vice president, California Cotton Ginner & Growers Associations
- *On Air Quality:* "The Valley receives 31 percent less in per capita federal funds than the national average [for air pollution prevention]." Seyed Sadredin, director, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

The annual conference was presented by California State University, Fresno's Center for Agricultural Business / California Agricultural Technology Institute, and sponsored by several businesses, organizations and individuals.

Ag's "people skills" need help

Delivering a "straight talk" message about managing California agricultural issues, George Soares said that agriculture needs to work on its "people skills." Soares was the keynote speaker at the Agribusiness Management Conference on Wednesday.

As a managing partner in Kahn, Soares & Conway and noted agricultural lobbyist, Soares said the agriculture industry needs to become more engaged in public policy discussions, "if we want to be

credible in the future." Citing that the weakest link in a business will keep that business from expanding, Soares said agriculture needs to improve people skills by re-packaging its messages and reaching out to better understand the urban voters in the state.

Agriculture needs to re-define its relevancy to the public, and should help educate the public that it is not a "novelty" in an increasingly urban state. He described a "west vs. east" mentality in the state on political issues that often pit the urban coast against the more rural inland valleys. The inability to connect with the public has become the missing link for the ag industry as a whole, Soares said. "Lawmakers do what the voting public wants them to do," Soares said. "Laws and regulations just don't appear. People vote them in," he added. The State's urban areas have become the new frontier for agriculture to help create change in the public's mindset about agriculture.

"If we can make enough noise, we can direct change, but we need to make sophisticated noise and exert pressure," he said. "If we can't manage the people issue, we will continue to lose."

Latest on Water Resources Development Act of 2007

President Bush suffered the first veto override of his presidency on Thursday, as the Senate (with a 79-14 vote) enacted the \$23 billion water resources bill, known as Water Resources Development Act 2007, HR1495. This bill funds hundreds of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers projects, such as dams, sewage plants and beach restoration that are important to local communities.

On Tuesday, the House voted 361-54 to override the veto Tuesday. Both votes easily exceeded the two-thirds majority needed in each chamber to negate a presidential veto.

Locally, the bill provides for a study to determine the feasibility of carrying out a project for water supply for Fresno, Kings, and Kern counties. Additionally, \$20 million will be appropriated to carry out the fisheries management plan for the Kings River.

Hollywood Update

There are some other perks that come from being number one! Because of Fresno County's number one status in food production, it often is tagged as the perfect place to film food and beverage

commercials, film documentaries or “country-themed” television shows.

Just this week, FCFB Dairy Commodity Chairman Donny Rollin’s corn fields served as the backdrop for a national print ad campaign for a major corn chip processor. Word is that the production company actually hired local extras by going into some of the watering holes in Old Town Clovis -- they wanted authenticity they couldn’t find in LA.

Also, this week, a production company from Southern California called the FCFB office, looking for an orange orchard to use for a commercial for a national grocery store chain. Likewise, a French film documentary crew was in western Fresno County for a couple of weeks last month to tape a feature film about California agriculture.

“This is not only wonderful for our local economy but great public relations for our area and our agriculture,” said Kristi Johnson, of the Fresno County Office of Tourism & Film Commission. Johnson is appreciative of the help and cooperation from the farmers and ranchers who are willing to offer their farms and ranches for these promotional opportunities.

Memorial service scheduled for Roy Gabriel

The California Farm Bureau Federation will be hosting a "Celebration of Life" memorial service for Roy Gabriel at the California State Railroad Museum in Old Town Sacramento on Thursday, Nov. 15 at 5:30 pm.

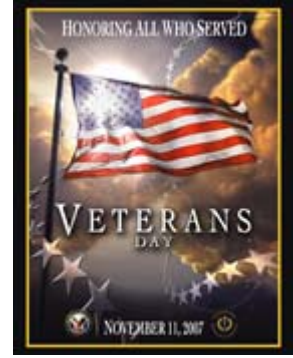
Mr. Gabriel died unexpectedly on Oct. 1, while on business in Washington, D. C. He was the director of labor affairs for California Farm Bureau Federation for nearly 35 years. For details, contact CFBF at (916) 561-5520.

Veterans Day is Nov. 11

Veterans Day will be observed on Sunday, Nov. 11. The observance of Veterans Day on Nov. 11 preserves the historical significance of the date, and helps focus attention on the purpose of the day: to honor America's veterans for their patriotism, love of country, and willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good.

The date is significant because of the cessation of fighting during World War I, known at the time as “The Great War,” when an armistice between

the Allied nations and Germany went into effect on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. For that reason, November 11, 1918, is generally regarded as the end of “the war to end all wars.” In November 1919, President Wilson proclaimed Nov. 11 as the first



commemoration of Armistice Day. Please remember our veterans on Sunday—those who sacrificed, those who served and those who are currently protecting freedom around the world.

Next Week’s Calendar

- Nov. 12** FCFB office will be open.
- Nov. 13** Fresno Fair Board of Directors meeting, 4 p.m., Fairgrounds
- Nov. 14** Chamber Governmental Affairs Retreat, 10 a.m., Chamber office
- Nov. 15** Roy Gabriel Memorial Service, 5:30 p.m., Sacramento

This Week’s Calendar

- Nov. 6** San Joaquin Valley Air District Citizens’ Advisory Committee; FCFB Ag Education Committee.
- Nov. 7** Fresno County Ag Lands Conservation Committee; Ag Management Conference/Ag Awards Luncheon
- Nov. 9** Business Industry & Government Coalition of the SJV; Chamber Ag, Water & Environment Committee meeting; KFSF Radio show on agriculture

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