



Still on the Governor's desk...

By Teresa Plascencia

FCFB Governmental Affairs Coordinator

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has until Oct. 14 to decide whether to sign the following bills into law, allow them to become laws without his signature, or veto them. These bills, if signed into law, may create challenges for California farmers and ranchers who work to provide a safe, affordable food supply:

SB 180 (Migden) - Strips farm employees of their right to a secure, secret-ballot election by substituting an unprotected process known as "majority sign-up election." It would eliminate an employee's right to a secret ballot election under the Agricultural Labor Relations Act.

SB 650 (Migden) - This bill would, until January 1, 2013, permit agricultural employees to select their labor representatives by submitting a petition to the labor board accompanied by representation cards signed by a majority of the bargaining unit. It would also eliminate an employer's right to a secret ballot.

SB 719 (Machado) - Undermines government accountability by expanding the San Joaquin Unified Air Pollution Control Board to include appointed members who would be neither accountable to district residents nor elected by constituents.

SB 63 (Migden) - Would require labeling of any food made from a cloned animal. The bill also creates an identification system for cloned livestock and their progeny. Despite a voluntary ban on cloned meat, U.S. Food and Drug Administration recently made a preliminary finding that it's safe to eat meat and drink milk from cloned cows, pigs and goats.

SB 1001 (Perata) - Allows the State Water Resources Board to revoke authority from the regional boards. Additionally, it would eliminate designated agricultural and other industry representatives from the membership of the nine regional water quality control boards.

AB 8 (Núñez) - Imposes a tax on farmers, ranchers and other small employers to fund health-care coverage for those who have not purchased health-care coverage.

AB 377 (Arambula) - Holds farmers responsible for illegal activities of farm labor contractors, over which

farmers have no control, by requiring contractors to disclose on employees' pay stubs the name and address of the farm that secured the contractor's services. The governor vetoed a similar bill last year. This year's version caps the number of growers listed on the stub at five.

AB 1100 (Ruskin) - Threatens the availability of production practices by requiring meat or milk from cloned animals or their progeny to be labeled, essentially banning new technology with benefits to farmers, ranchers and consumers.

AB 118 (Núñez) - Would increase vehicle and boat registration fees to pay for alternative fuel research and clean-air initiatives. Annual fees that most auto owners pay would increase by \$11.

SB 70 (Flores) - Would allow cities, counties and school districts to operate vehicles using fuels with higher concentrations of biodiesel than allowed under current law -- but only if air regulators find that the fuel blend will not contribute to air pollution.

Federal Judge makes ruling on "No-Match" SS rule

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On Wednesday, U.S. District Judge Charles Breyer issued a preliminary injunction stopping the government from enforcing a new rule to use Social Security records for immigration enforcement, ensuring that U.S. citizens and legal residents will not lose their jobs because of errors in the Social Security Administration (SSA) database. The judge's order keeps the SSA from sending notices to approximately 140,000 employers across the country notifying employers of the new rule, which would impact approximately eight million workers. The injunction will remain in place until Judge Breyer holds further hearings.

Consequently, this preliminary injunction does not guarantee that the implementation rule is a dead issue. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff said the decision Wednesday was disappointing, but wasn't more than a "bump in the road" in the agency's drive to vigorously enforce laws aimed at keeping illegal immigrants out of the work force. The

government will evaluate its options and determine whether to appeal the decision.

State legislature water bond update

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A Democratic water bond proposal was defeated in the state Senate on Tuesday. Republicans opposed the \$6.8 billion measure, which failed 23-12, four votes short of the required two-thirds majority.

Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata's bond would have allowed communities to compete for state grants to build their own dams, improve water efficiency, recycle water and store water underground. It also would have set aside money to strengthen levees and restore the troubled Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Given the failed attempt, Perata vowed to launch a signature-gathering campaign to qualify the proposal for the ballot as an initiative. He also asked the Senate to reconsider the bond, so that it can be used as a vehicle for a possible compromise between Democrats, Republicans and Gov. Schwarzenegger.

Republicans are also considering their own signature-gathering drive, raising the possibility that voters would be faced with two ballot measures. Schwarzenegger's plan, written by Sen. Dave Cogdill, earmarks \$5.1 billion for new dams -- including Temperance Flat near Fresno. The state would pay for up to 50 percent of the projects, with local users paying the rest.

Meetings are still taking place and a legislative compromise is still possible. Lawmakers have until Tuesday, October 16, to get a bond on the Feb. 5 presidential primary ballot. If Schwarzenegger and the Senate negotiators can agree on the language, then Perata must call the Senate into session to vote on it. If it passes, it goes to the Assembly for a vote.

Vegetable crop update

According to USDA, lettuce producers in California intend to harvest 28,000 acres in 2007, seven percent below 2006. Declines in acreage can be attributed to water shortages in the San Joaquin Valley. Fall harvest is expected to begin around mid-October. For about one month in the spring and in the fall, westside Fresno County produces about 95 percent of the nation's supply of lettuce. The

Westlands Water District says it expects farmers in the Huron area to reduce spring lettuce acreage by half due to the uncertainty in water availability. Dry weather, court decisions and other factors will likely reduce water supplies for farms in the region.

California broccoli producers are forecasted to produce 28,000 acres, seven percent below 2006. The broccoli crop was reported to be in good condition with no major pests or disease problems.

California's 2007 summer storage onion production is 6 percent below 2006. However, yield is up slightly per acre. Harvested area is expected to be 29,700 acres, seven percent below 2006.

Cool temperatures in the San Joaquin region slowed crop development of onions, delaying harvest up to several weeks. Fortunately, no major disease problems were reported, and the delayed harvest didn't effect production of onions. Onions were the number eight crop in Fresno County in 2006.

Conference to highlight fresh approaches to fertilizing techniques

The California Department of Food and Agriculture's Fertilizer Research and Education Program will team up with the Western Plant Health Association (WPHA) to present "Fresh Approaches to Fertilizing Techniques," a conference to be held November 27-28, at the Heritage Complex of the International Agri-Center in Tulare.

This year's program is expanded in scope to appeal to a wider range of agricultural supply and service consultants; growers; and personnel from university extension, local, state and national governmental agencies. Presenters will provide general and technical information; current research data; and practical applications for each of five key agricultural topics: Micronutrients, foliar fertilizer application, water management and fertigation, plant nutrient and soil assessment tools for manure management. Certified Crop Adviser and Pest Control Adviser continuing education units are expected to be available.

Early conference registration to be postmarked by November 1, is \$65 per day or \$110 for both days; fees are waived for currently enrolled students. After November 1, registration fees are \$75 per day or \$130 for both days; students' fees are \$10 per day.

Conference registration and additional information is available through the website <http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/fflders/frep.html>, or by contacting the CDFA FREP at (916) 445-0444 or via email at frep@cdfa.ca.gov.

Northern California rains help range conditions

Cattle ranchers welcomed a much-needed early rain that reached Northern California. In many areas, the rain brought enough moisture to cause rangeland grass seeds to germinate. Ranchers say they need a series of rains throughout the autumn and winter to help the range recover. Recent government reports rate 90 percent of California's rangeland as in poor or very poor condition. This week's storm missed Southern California, where rangelands remain parched.

2008 Outstanding Teacher of the Year Nominations due October 26

The California Foundation for Ag in the Classroom is currently taking nominations for teachers across the state who deserve to be recognized for bringing agriculture into their classrooms! Nominate these outstanding teachers for the Foundation's Outstanding Teacher of the Year award by October 26. The application deadline is November 26. For more information about the recognition program, visit www.cfaitc.org/Educator/Educator.php.

Imagine this... story writing contest deadline - November 1

The California Foundation for Ag in the Classroom is holding a story writing contest to create awareness of California's food and fiber production. The contest offers recognition and prizes to student authors, as well as satisfying teaching standards in English-Language Arts. This year's state-winning students will be given the honor of having their stories published in an illustrated book! One state winner will be selected from each grade level, and, with their teachers and parents, will be treated to a trip to Sacramento and honored at an awards ceremony during National Agriculture Week in March 2008. For more contest brochures or questions on how to compete, contact Nicolina Prestininzi at nprestininzi@cfbf.com.

Valley legislators to discuss 2008 agenda

The Valley Legislative Delegation will join together on Friday, November 2, at noon at the Fresno Chamber of Commerce, to inform citizens of the anticipated agenda for the new legislative session.

The theme is: "What's on the Slate for 2008?" The Central Valley legislative delegation invited to the event includes the offices of: Sen. Diane Feinstein, Sen. Barbara Boxer, Cong. Jim Costa, Cong. Devin Nunes, Cong. George Radanovich, Sen. Dave Cogdill, Assm. Juan Arambula, Assm. Mike Villines and Assm. Nicole Parra. Lunch will be provided. To reserve a seat, please call Amy Huerta at (559) 458-4800 or via email at ahuerta@fresnochamber.com.

Next Week's Calendar

- Oct. 16 FCFB Executive Meeting, Noon, FCFB office; FCFB Ag Education Committee meeting, 3 p.m., FCFB office
- Oct. 19 Ag One Foundation Annual Alumni & Friends Winetasting Social, 5:30-7:30 p.m., Fresno State winery

This Week's Calendar

- Oct. 8 Fact Class V Session
- Oct. 9 Fair ag education presentations (Oct. 9-12)
- Oct. 10 Fresno Chamber Governmental Affairs Committee meeting; Fresno Fair Past Directors Night

Have you visited Fresno Farm Bureau's web site lately? Check it out at: www.fcfb.org. If you have trouble getting on the site, call us at (559) 237-0263.

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