



The California Grape & Tree Fruit League's Board of Directors identifies the top 10 issues, in order of priority, on an annual basis. The 2012 Top Ten Issues are as follows:

- 1 LABOR LAWS/REGULATIONS SB 126 IMPLEMENTATION**
In June 2011, Gov. Brown declined to sign SB 104, "card check," which would have required a farm employer to recognize a union simply on the strength of a majority of the employees signing cards showing interest in unionization. However, despite the veto of card check legislation for the fifth consecutive year, the Governor moved forward with a proposal of his own, SB 126, which made significant changes affecting the balance of the Agricultural Labor Relations Act respecting the union certification and findings of misconduct on the part of the employer.
- 2 IMMIGRATION REFORM/ENFORCEMENT/E-VERIFY**
Past attempts to secure passage of both a comprehensive immigration package and piecemeal approaches have been met with fierce resistance and slowed by electoral politics. The recent effort to elevate the profile of mandatory E-Verify legislation served to mobilize the agricultural industry to work to address the need to immediately identify a workable agricultural worker solution. Working with key Congressional leaders, the League, together with various agricultural associations throughout the U.S., worked to communicate the importance of protecting domestic agriculture. While the E-Verify legislation is on hold, efforts continue to bridge the gap between economic and political realities.
- 3 LABOR COSTS**
Operating costs, including those of California's family-farming operations, continue to increase due to regulatory burdens. Because of the cultural, harvest and packaging requirements, the costs associated with total production range anywhere from 50-70%. Hence, government mandated increases in wage structure adds to the challenge of remaining economically viable in the quest to continue producing the highest quality fruit in California. Even though seasonal wages generally average \$9 to \$12 per hour, every minimum wage mandated increase causes each category of wages to grow incrementally higher.
- 4 WATER SUPPLY ISSUES**
The League's membership is highly diverse, geographically spanning from Lake and Mendocino counties in the north down through the San Joaquin Valley and south into the Coachella Valley. The need for long-term water certainty remains of utmost importance to maintain a viable agricultural sector. However, concern remains over the prospect of securing an agreement on long-term water certainty in a state divided over questions of water conveyance, capturing supply and ecosystem protection.
- 5 INVASIVE PEST ISSUES**
The League continues to work with key regulatory officials and trading partners in the effort to combat the devastating effect of invasive pests, such as the European Grapevine Moth, Melon Fruit Fly, Spotted Wing Drosophila and Light Brown Apple Moth, at a time when federal and state resources are shrinking.
- 6 FOOD SAFETY REGULATIONS**
The passage of the Food Safety Modernization Act, and subsequent implementation, has great significance for the nation's food supply. The League worked with fellow agricultural organizations and Congressional allies to advocate the importance of working to improve practices, throughout the entire supply chain, which took into account commodity profile and risk of contamination using historical perspectives. The large implementation effort has the potential to unjustly affect growing and harvesting practices, absent recognition of commodity risk-profiles. The League is positioned to work with agencies to shape implementing language.
- 7 WORKERS' COMP COSTS**
The potential for an increase in workers' compensation costs remains an important concern, as carriers have sought rate adjustments to cover the rising costs associated with health care.
- 8 HEALTH CARE MANDATES**
As health costs continue to rise, employer mandates resulting from the passage of the federal health care proposal, have the potential to further increase the operational costs for California agriculture.
- 9 AIR QUALITY REGULATIONS/FEES/COSTS**
Regulations imposed at the federal, state and local levels impact agricultural operations as stationary sources. The implementation of the truck and bus on-road diesel emissions regulation will require California farmers to replace fully-operational vehicles to meet ever-increasing air quality goals. Despite continued efforts to work to improve California's air quality, regulatory schemes continue to develop, aimed at targeting industry for added improvements to reduce emissions. While agriculture has and will continue to work to improve on-farm operations in order to reduce certain emissions, the continued focus onto the agricultural sector serves to add additional costs and negatively impact the ability to operate in the Golden State.
- 10 AVAILABILITY OF PLANT HEALTH MATERIALS**
The League works to protect the use of critical plant health materials to ensure quality, marketable fruit. The League is well-positioned to serve as the conduit for preserving critical tools for the fresh grape, berry and deciduous tree fruit sectors in order to meet the demands of the domestic and international markets.

THE OTHER TOP ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THE BOARD WERE:

11) Energy Costs; 12) Produce Traceability Initiative/Implementation Costs; 13) Water Quality Regulations; 14) Estate Tax Relief; and 15) Farm Bill/Specialty Crop Funding.