



CGTFL'S 2013 TOP TEN ISSUES



The California Grape & Tree Fruit League's Board of Directors identifies the top 10 issues, in order of priority, on an annual basis. The 2013 Top Ten Issues are as follows:

1 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. Efforts continue to bridge the gap between economic and political realities. A comprehensive reform bill, one that includes an agricultural component, is likely to be introduced by spring 2013. The League is part of a national coalition, the Agricultural Coalition for Immigration Reform (ACIR), which has worked in years past on securing passage of AgJOBS and other measures designed to add relief to the agricultural labor situation. Most of the initial discussions surrounding immigration policy reform have centered on the introduction of a single proposal, inclusive of a worker program for new hires, as well as an adjustment of status for individuals currently residing in the U.S. and employed in agriculture.

2 LABOR LAWS/REGULATIONS/OSHA/ALRA/SB 126

In June 2011, Governor Brown vetoed SB 104 "card check" legislation and 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. In 2013, emboldened by a supermajority in the Legislature, union activists have introduced legislation to circumvent the bargaining process to move immediately to mandatory mediation. Additionally, Senate Bill 25 expands the definition of an "agricultural employer" to include subsequent purchasers of an agricultural employer's business where the original employer had an obligation to bargain with its workers. These efforts are aimed at capitalizing on prior election results, often times decades old, in lieu of conveying the current value of collective bargaining representation to drive present day representative elections.

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. 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, spanning geographically 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 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.

6 INVASIVE PEST ISSUES/QUARANTINE COSTS & IMPACTS

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 resources are shrinking.

7 WORKERS' COMPENSATION COSTS

Increases in workers' compensation costs remain an important concern, as carriers have sought rate adjustments to cover the rising costs associated with health care.

8 FOOD SAFETY REGULATIONS/AUDIT HARMONIZATION

The passage and subsequent implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act 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 the rules implementing the Food Safety Modernization Act to ensure appropriate applicability to the growing, harvesting, packing and holding activities of its membership.

9 AIR QUALITY REGULATIONS/FEES/COSTS

The implementation of the truck and bus on-road diesel emissions regulation requires California farmers to replace operational vehicles in order to meet increasing air quality goals. Combined with anticipated regulations, such as the off-road mobile agricultural equipment regulation, farmers will be faced with added costs associated with improving air quality. While the agricultural sector has demonstrated a significant commitment to updating equipment to cleaner versions, the League remains positioned to advocate on behalf of its membership against burdensome regulatory impacts which affect its member operations' ability to remain economically and competitively viable while remaining in the State of California.

10 WATER QUALITY REGULATIONS (NITROGEN, SALTS, ETC.)

The state has placed much of the burden of improving the water quality for disadvantaged communities in rural areas onto agriculture. With new regulations aimed at regulating agricultural irrigation and fertilization practices, farming operations will see added impacts in the form of compliance costs. Combined with a high level of interest in the Legislature to create new funding streams for clean drinking solutions, the League is positioned to continue its work across legislative and regulatory audiences to shape rules and legislative proposals in a way which recognizes there is responsibility on the part of the state, not just agriculture, to ensure compliance with drinking water regulatory goals.