



California Association of Wheat Growers

Newsletter

February 17, 2017

**Thank you for your commitment to
the future of agriculture and our membership.**

California Legislative Update

By Dennis Albiani, Legislative Advocate

Senator Makes another Run Expanding Family Leave

Senator Jackson of Santa Barbara has introduced two bills to expand Family Leave laws in California. **SB 63 (Jackson)** creates the New Parent Leave Act that would mandate up to 12 weeks of job-protected maternity and paternity leave for California employees who work for smaller companies. The bill would provide 3 additional months of leave for employees of companies with 20 to 49 employees. It is estimated that an additional 2.7 million California employees would fall under these provisions. This is a massive expansion of current law, which provides this additional protected leave for employees who work for an employer of 50 or more.



SB 63 will impact smaller employers with as few as 20 employees by requiring that they provide an additional 12 weeks of mandatory parental leave, on top of leave that CA already requires, for a total of 7 months of protected leave. Though the additional leave is unpaid, it is still a burden to employers who have to continue to pay the worker's medical benefits, pay for the temporary position to cover the employee's duties, and/or the overtime pay for other employees to cover the worker's duties.

Also introduced by Senator Jackson, **SB 62** expands the family members for whom an employee may take a 12-week protected leave of absence to care for. The expansion would extend the existing available leave to care for a child, parent or spouse to include expanded definitions and grandparents, grandchildren, and siblings. By significantly expanding the type of individuals for which employees can take leave under the California Family Rights Act (CFRA), California employees will be allowed to take up to 6 months of protected leave in a one year period. This bill applies to employers with 50 employees or more.

Both bills are reintroductions of similar bills previously authored by Jackson and vetoed by Governor Jerry Brown. The Governor's veto messages acknowledged that expansions provided in these bills would create disparities between California's law and the Federal Medical Leave Act and, in certain circumstances, could require employers to provide employees up to 6 months of family leave in a year. Such extended periods of leave are unreasonable for employers with limited and specialized workforces to shoulder. These bills narrowly passed through the legislature last year and will be another fight for small employers in this state.

Water Bills Begin to Take Shape

There have been many water bills introduced so far this year. However, many of those bills address novel issues. Below is a discussion of a couple with statewide significance that will garner attention.

Water Rights Reorganization **AB 313 (Gray)** would transfer water rights authorities from the State Water Resources Control Board to the Department of Water Resources. It would also establish a division of water rights within the Office of Administrative Hearings. Complaints against persons violating provisions of their water diversions would be heard by an administrative law judge in OAH, however decisions would not be final until accepted by the director of the Department of Water Resources. The measure would also require the department to base the water rights fee schedule on a 2-year average of actual diversion amounts for each individual water right. Additionally, the water board's responsibility to prevent waste and unreasonable use would be transferred to the department. Water board authority to develop interim groundwater management plans for probationary groundwater basins would also be transferred to the department. Finally, AB 313 would establish a 9-member State Water Project Commission to have authority over the State Water Project, currently under department authority. The bill follows the recommendations of a 2010 Little Hoover Commission report.

Water Rate Structure and Water Affordability **SCA 4 (Hertzberg)** would insure everyone has access to affordable water. It would declare the intent of the Legislature to amend the California Constitution to provide a program that would ensure that affordable water is available to all Californians and to ensure that water conservation is given a permanent role in California. According to the author the bill, it would allow water districts to provide voluntary water subsidies for low wealth residences and allow for tiered water rates without following the current requirement of a cost benefit study and design.

The association has met with the authors and will be following these measures closely. We encourage growers and business owners to contact their water district to discuss the measures and expected impacts.

CAWG Congressional Delegation Attends the National Association of Wheat Growers Winter Meetings and Engages 19 Congressional members

By Nick Matteis

CAWG board members Jim Parsons, Larry Hunn and Doug Grupe as well as CAWG Executive Director, Nick Matteis traveled to Washington D.C. to attend the National

Association's winter meeting and meet with key Congresspersons January 30-February 3.

During their hill visits, the delegation engaged Congresspersons and staff in conversation regarding Immigration reform and the need for a functional guest worker program; the new Farm Bill and the importance of an effective safety net program and the importance of the conservations programs.

The delegation also focused on the necessity for federal funding of key wheat research programs like the Wheat and Barley SCAB Initiative as well funding for the regional Agricultural Research Services Labs that support wheat research in the state and maximum funding levels for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture competitive grant program that has funded some of the work of California's wheat breeder program led by Jorge Dubcovsky at UC Davis and other collaborating universities throughout the world like the most recently awarded \$9.7 million CAP grant <https://www.ucdavis.edu/news/new-97-million-grant-funds-search-wheat-yield-genes>.

The delegation also discussed California's need for advancement of new water infrastructure projects and expressed their gratitude for the recent passage of the Western States Drought Relief Act, which in addition to providing additional funding for infrastructure, water quality and environmental projects, provided greater flexibility for pumping water out of the delta when high flows allowed.

Trade issues were also discussed especially in the context of the new administration's departure from the Trans Pacific Partnership multilateral free trade agreement and the potential of re-opening the North American Free Trade Agreement.

The delegation had 19 successful meetings with Congresspersons and staff and will remain engaged as this year's legislative session progresses.

National Association of Wheat Growers

House Panel Hears from Experts about Troubling Economic Conditions in Agriculture

Yesterday the House Agriculture Committee held a hearing to review the economic challenges facing rural America. The National Association of Wheat Growers recognize the hardships that wheat producers are facing in a time of low prices that have dropped below cost of production for many. With this, NAWG applauds the committee for holding this hearing and to get input from several economists about key economic indicators and an overview of the stress in the farm economy. NAWG also applauds Chairman Mike Conaway's attention to and



understanding of the fact that "there is real potential for a crisis in rural America."

This hearing was intended to help develop a framework in which Congress will be writing the next Farm Bill. Moving forward, as NAWG finished its Farm Bill priority development process, the organization looks forward to working with the Committee to draft a strong, comprehensive farm bill.

To view the hearing and to read testimony from the witnesses, click [here](#).

House Ag Committee Approves Two Pesticide Measures

Today, the House Agriculture Committee [approved](#) two measures regarding the regulation of pesticides. The Reducing Regulatory Burdens Act ([H.R. 953](#)) would eliminate the duplicative permit requirement for use of pesticides that have already been approved by the EPA in the Federal Insecticide Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). Senator Crapo (R-ID) has also introduced similar legislation in the Senate. The National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), a permit under the Clean Water Act that addresses water pollution by regulating point sources that discharge pollutants into the waters of the United States, adds additional and unnecessary burdens to producers applying pesticides on or near water. The Environmental Protection Agency's FIFRA registration and review of crop protection products takes into consideration environmental and human risk and it is unnecessary to have both requirements. The National Association of Wheat Growers applauds the Committee's action and urges House leadership to bring this to a vote on the House floor as it would bring regulatory clarity on pesticide applications.

The Committee also approved the Pesticide Registration Enhancement Act ([H.R. 1029](#)), which would reauthorize the Pesticide Registration Improvement Act (PRIA).

Contact Information

California Association of Wheat Growers
1521 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916)492-7066 Fax (916)446-1063
E-mail: nmatteis@cgfa.org
Jane Townsend - Manager
Nick Matteis - Executive Director