



August 26, 2011

AB 276 (Luis Alejo, D-Salinas) was originally introduced as a bill to require reports on the fiscal condition of local governments, but was gutted then amended on August 18. As amended, AB 276 would repeal several sections of mandatory mediation provisions that dictate when a collective bargaining negotiation can be referred to mandatory mediation. These mandatory mediation provisions were added to the Agricultural Labor Relations Act during the term of Gray Governor Davis. AB 276 repeals the provision establishing conditions necessary for making a renewed demand to bargain and would instead provide that the declaration for mandatory mediation may be filed 180 days after any request to bargain. AB 276 as amended would give the UFW reason to simply wait out the shorter time period—180 days—before filing a petition for binding arbitration, rather than bargaining in good faith with an employer. Further, the union’s right to request binding arbitration would not be limited to the “initial” contract as required under existing law. Farm Bureau and other agricultural employer groups oppose AB 276, which is now pending in the Senate Rules Committee.

SB 618 (Lois Wolk, D-Davis) that would encourage the siting of utility-scale photovoltaic solar projects on marginally productive or physically impaired farmland was amended by the Assembly Appropriations Committee and passed unanimously to the Assembly Floor. The bill would allow land that fits the definition of “marginally productive or physically impaired” to terminate its Williamson Act contract through the rescission process provided it is enrolled in a solar-use easement. The amendments tighten the definitions of the qualifying land to stop any potential manipulation of the process and to require a rescission fee equal to six percent of the current market value of the land. Any proposed designated land for this process would have to be reviewed and approved by the Director of the Department of Conservation, in consultation with the Secretary of Food and Agriculture and with consideration of information from local agricultural commissioners where the land is located. Farm Bureau supports SB 618 as a means of taking pressure off of productive farmland whether in the Williamson Act or not. Farm Bureau and other groups are in negotiations with the Governor’s Office on one final set of floor amendments to bill.

The Assembly Appropriations Committee did not release the legislation sponsored by the environmental justice community that garnered and distributed 10% of the revenues that will be paid by large businesses subject to the state’s new mandatory climate change program (AB 32). Financial and policy concerns kept SB 535 (Kevin De Leon, D-Los Angeles) from moving

forward this legislative session. The goal of SB 535 is to set up a process that allows the funds from the cap and trade program to be used in the most impacted and disadvantaged communities to fund projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions or mitigate the impact of climate change. Farm Bureau opposes.

The following bills were passed out of the Senate Appropriations Committee and now go to the Senate floor for consideration:

AB 581 (John A. Perez) creates the California Healthy Food Financing Initiative and fund to expand access to healthy foods in underserved communities. The federal government created a Healthy Food Financing Initiative in 2010 as a partnership between the federal Departments of the Treasury, Agriculture, and Health and Human Services to promote a range of interventions that expand access to nutritious foods in communities that currently lack access to healthy food. AB 581 creates a similar program in California if the state should receive federal funding for the program. Farm Bureau supports AB 581, which passed out of the committee 6-1.

AB 6 (Felipe Fuentes, D-Sylmar) improves access to CalFresh, California's "food stamp" program, by streamlining the reporting requirements, implementing cost saving measures to fraud prevention efforts, and implementing a "heat and eat" provision that increases access to additional federal funding. Farm Bureau supports AB 6, which passed out of committee 6-3.

AB 69 (Jim Beall, D-San Jose) improves access for California seniors to CalFresh, California's "food stamp" program, by allowing counties to utilize existing federal data to simplify enrollment for low-income seniors. CFBF supports AB 69 which passed out of committee 6-2.

AB 228 (Felipe Fuentes, D-Los Angeles) clarifies the insurance code by clearly stating the authority for employers to seek workers' comp coverage from State Fund for all employee's working in-state or out-of-state. AB 228 passed out of committee 6-3. Farm Bureau supports.

AB 292 (Cathleen Galgiani, D-Tracy) would require the High Speed Rail Authority to appoint an agricultural advisory committee. The advisory committee will be tasked with advising the authority on the impacts their policies, plans and procedures will have on the agricultural community. AB 292 passed out of committee 5-3. Farm Bureau supports.