

News Release from: Ore. Association of Nurseries

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY LEADERS SPEAK OUT ON SWEEPING E-VERIFY REQUIREMENTS SET FORTH BY U.S. HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

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September 23, 2011, Wilsonville, Ore. - Oregon agriculture leaders responded sharply to news this week that the House Judiciary Committee approved Chairman Lamar Smith's H.R.2885, the Legal Workforce Act.

Top officials with the Oregon Association of Nurseries, Oregon Dairy Commission, Oregon Winegrowers Association, and the Oregon Farm Bureau strongly oppose H.R. 2885, which would make a federal E-Verify system mandatory for all U.S. employers within three years.

"H.R. 2885 shortchanges the necessary conversation about comprehensive reform," said Jeff Stone, executive director of the Oregon Association of Nurseries. "Congress needs to act on a balanced approach that considers both the current and future employment needs of our economy."

The bill does not provide relief for agricultural or seasonal employers. Nor does it address high-priority issues related to immigration reform, such as employers' future workforce needs or increased border security.

"Mandatory E-Verify, without some consideration for the future flow of workers, will harm job creation in the name of creating jobs," said Jim Krahn, executive director of the Oregon Dairy Farmers Association. "The bill will decimate Oregon's dairy farmers who have little prospect of workers being replaced by Americans looking for full-time and non-farm work."

The four groups represent one segment of the Coalition for A Working Oregon, a unique alliance of business and industry leaders formed to articulate the need for comprehensive immigration reform. Today, the group sent a letter to Speaker Boehner, expressing strong opposition to H.R. 2885, the Legal Workforce Act.

"This legislation would have an extremely detrimental effect on Oregon's \$2.7 billion wine industry, which accounted for more than 13,500 jobs last year," said Sam Tannahill, chairman of the Oregon Winegrowers Association. "It unfairly places the burden of policing the U.S. immigration system on the backs of hundreds of mostly small winegrowers and threatens the healthy growth we are currently experiencing."

A study conducted by William K. Jaeger, Ph.D, a professor with Oregon State University affirms that immigrant labor contributes significant value to Oregon's economy and is inexorably linked to key industries, such as agriculture. According to the study, removal of undocumented workers could cause a loss of 173,500 jobs in the short-term, or 7.7 percent of Oregon's workforce, along with a reduction in statewide annual production of up to \$17.7 billion.

"We face a growing workforce crisis that threatens American agriculture, and Congress needs to act on real solutions that work for all industries," said Dave Dillon, executive vice president of the Oregon Farm Bureau. "E-Verify alone doesn't resolve our country's flawed immigration

system. Without better legal workforce options, Oregon farmers would be irreparably harmed by this bill."

An enforcement-only approach is particularly damaging to Oregon's labor-dependent industries because it provides no mechanism to replace workers removed from the system. According to the Jaeger study, immigrant labor comprises 4.3 percent of Oregon's total workforce or roughly 100,000 workers. The percentages are much higher in the state's hospitality, agriculture and construction industries.

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About the Oregon Farm Bureau:

The state's largest general farm organization, Oregon Farm Bureau is a voluntary, grassroots, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization representing the interests of the state's farmers and ranchers in the public and policymaking arenas. First established in Oregon in 1919, Farm Bureau is organized in all 36 counties and has more than 8,000 member families that are professionally engaged in agriculture. For more information, call 503-399-1701.

About the Oregon Association of Nurseries:

The Oregon Association of Nurseries, based in Wilsonville, represents more than 1,200 wholesale growers, retailers, landscapers and suppliers. Oregon's ornamental horticulture industry is among the state's largest agricultural sectors, with annual sales of \$740 million. Oregon's nursery industry is a traded sector; nearly 75 percent of the nursery plants grown in Oregon are shipped out of state. For information, visit www.oan.org or call 503-682-5089.

About the Oregon Dairy Farmers Association:

The Oregon Dairy Farmers Association works on behalf of Oregon's 280 dairy farm families. For more information, please call 503-780-9956.

About the Oregon Wine Board:

The Oregon Wine Board (OWB) is a semi-independent Oregon state agency managing marketing, research and education initiatives that support and advance the Oregon wine and wine grape industry. The Board works on behalf of all Oregon wineries and independent growers throughout the state's diverse winegrowing regions. The Oregon wine grape and wine industry contributes more than \$2.7 billion of economic activity to the state economy each year, including more than 13,500 wine-related jobs.

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