



Merced County Farm News



Governor Invitation to Merced

By: Merced Irrigation District

Merced Irrigation District General Manager John Sweigard issued the following open invitation to Governor Gavin Newsom today.

For years, we have worked in good faith with the State Water Board, your secretaries and your staff. Despite our best efforts, and backed by solid science about salmon and the Merced River, we have not been able to reach a settlement agreement that would protect our community's water supply under the Bay Delta Water Quality Control Plan. I would like to

personally invite you to come to our community and learn firsthand about the tremendous amount of work we have undertaken to support salmon on the Merced River, as well as the impacts the Bay Delta Plan would have on our already disadvantaged communities. We believe there are still alternatives to the Bay Delta Plan that could benefit the state's goals while still protecting our community's water supply.

Lake McClure is owned and operated by Merced Irrigation District. The reservoir is located in the Sierra Nevada foothills. It provides local water supply, flood control, hydroelectric generation, support

of the statewide electric grid, and water for the local environment and wildlife preserves. The water from Lake McClure is crucial for helping replenish local groundwater used by cities and provides water to farmers in eastern Merced County.

The invitation to Governor Newsom follows a meeting by the State Water Resources Control Board on December 8. During the meeting, discussion ensued about the state's plans to divert water from Lake McClure to the Bay Delta. Numerous organizations lobbied for the State Water Board to move quickly. Some speakers called on the State Water Board to begin diverting water from Lake McClure as early as

the beginning of the new year under emergency orders.

Following that meeting, MID's Mr. Sweigard called on every resident of Atwater, Merced, Livingston and the surrounding communities to write to Governor Newsom and the State Water Board. Today, he also invited the Governor to visit Merced.

Contact information for Governor Newsom and State Water Board officials, as well as an online petition, can be found at www.SaveMercedWater.com

For additional information about the Bay Delta Plan and eastern Merced County's water supply, please visit mercedid.org.

Farm Bureau to support petitions for citizenship

By: Peter Hecht, AgAlert

California's largest membership agricultural organization is partnering with immigration advocates to support U.S. citizenship applications from farm employees who may be eligible for naturalization.

California accounts for one in every three farmworkers in the United States, with an estimated 800,000 people working in agriculture at some point during the year.

Now the California Farm Bureau, whose nearly 31,000 members include farmers, ranchers and agricultural businesses across the state, will pay for U.S. citizenship application services

and legal counseling for eligible employees of any Farm Bureau member seeking assistance on their behalf.

The program is the result of a new partnership between the California Farm Bureau and the National Immigration Forum. Farm Bureau has signed a contract with the NIF for the naturalization application and counseling services.

The Immigration Forum's first-ever citizenship partnership with a state agricultural organization was announced Dec. 6 at the California Farm Bureau's 103rd Annual Meeting in Orange County.

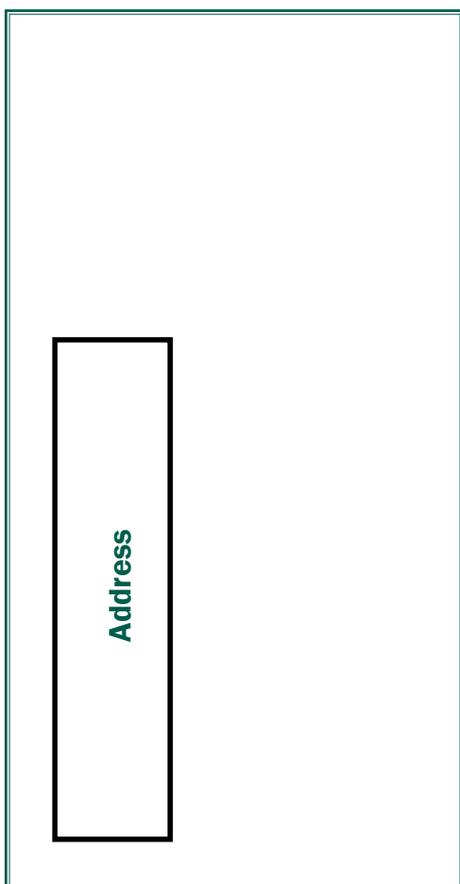
Bryan Little, the Farm Bureau's

director of employment policy and chief operating officer of the Farm Employers Labor Service, said the citizenship partnership is intended to help stabilize the workforce in the United States' leading agricultural economy.

"The efforts of this new immigration partnership go hand in hand with California Farm Bureau's longstanding commitment to rational immigration policies that recognize the fundamental humanity and dignity of people we work with every day," Little said in announcing the program.

The services provided will include

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from the
**President's
 Corner**
 Eric Harcksen

Greetings Merced County Farm Bureau members. I hope this finds you and your family well this holiday season.

New order of a mask mandate for indoors from the Governor's office. I certainly hope that we can learn from our mistakes from the last go around with COVID. Mistakes that we are still paying for right now from supply chain and lack of employees that want to fill job positions available. We need to help spread awareness on how important it is for people to go out into the workforce to help build back better communities. This is what is going to

make harvest run smoothly and get more product out with more efficiency.

I think this is something that we could do a better job at drawing some realities from and informing not ourselves but the general public of. Without strong agriculture you cannot have a strong economy. Agriculture is the backbone of every strong economy. I am afraid that most people do not recognize this. They don't understand until the shelves become empty and farmers leave the area in search of areas that will help them become more prosperous. Only then will farms and water become a topic of interest.

Myself, Joe Sansoni, David Barroso, and Gino Pedretti all attended this year's CABF annual meeting in Garden Grove, CA as your delegates. Denelle Flake and Alexxis Rudich attended, representing YF&R. Breanne Vandenberg attended representing us as our county manager. Overall, I feel this year's annual convention went well. We attended many breakout sessions and represented our county at the state level.

I would like to personally wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Here is to a better 2022!!

It feels hard to believe that's we're closing the books on another year, but here we are making plans with family and friends for Christmas. Delegates and staff recently returned from participating in California Farm Bureau's 103rd Annual Meeting held in Anaheim. Members attended various breakout sessions, held conversations with other counties discussing the issues impacting members and elected officers Jamie Johannsen as CABF President, Shannon Douglass as 1st Vice President and Shaun Crook as 2nd Vice President.

This year has had its struggles, but we have come out well to fight another year. We made our membership goal thanks to all of you who believe in the work we do. You may not always agree with every stance we take, but know we take everything into account and do make our decisions with your best interests at heart. Last year, MCFB was recognized as a finalist for the California Farm Bureau Innovator Award. We were selected as a finalist for our work in immediately maneuvering the FARM2U program from an in-person event to an online platform due to COVID-19 precautions. Unfortunately,

Sacramento County Farm Bureau took the award that year.

This year we were a finalist for the County of Excellence Award. There are three classes for this award, all based on membership levels. Napa and Sonoma County Farm Bureaus were also finalists for this class. Our nomination as a finalist comes from our work on Proposition 15, COVID updates & aid, the Nolan Pedretti fundraiser and more. We are thrilled to be recognized as a finalist this year, however that is as far as we made it. This was our first year being recognized in this capacity, capping off a good, but challenging year.

We also plan to start the coming year off strong and are developing an extensive list of events that you can take part in including coffee sessions, training workshops and updates on issues such as labor and water. We have been very watchful on the animal activists front and the outcomes that will take place following the September event at Foster Farms. I encourage those of you in the Merced Irrigation District to support them in their grievances with the the State Water Board actions. These issues, related to the Bay Delta Plan, also

have implications for the Stanislaus and Tuolumne Rivers. As our water complexities continue to develop, we must be watchful for all impacts to water no matter if you are in a district or not. MCFB strongly believes in being the frontlines for you and your families on these issues.

We've had an incredibly busy year between advocating for you at the local, state, and federal levels. We couldn't do it without your continued support throughout the year. I would like to extend a thank you to our board as without their direction and dedication, our organization would not have the grassroots effect that we have today. Our staff of Lorraine Passadori, Denelle Flake and Alexxis Rudich has been phenomenal. We not only have been able to move swiftly and timely on projects of various natures but have also taken on more with the growth in staff. They are all the ones that really keep this organization moving forward and I would not be able to do my job without them.

We have some challenging times ahead of us between water, animal activists, water, labor, and well, water. Thanks to you we are in the trenches with you, day in and day out. We look



from the
**Director's
 Desk**
 Breanne Vandenberg

forward to discussing more with you and your families in 2022. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Merced County Farm Bureau's Mission Statement

Merced County Farm Bureau is an independent, non-governmental, grassroots organization that advocates for the men and women who provide food, fiber, and nursery products for our community, state, and nation.

Merced County Farm Bureau exists for the purpose of improving the ability of individuals engaged in production agriculture to utilize

California resources to produce food and fiber in the most profitable, efficient and responsible manner possible, guaranteeing our nation a domestic food supply.

Merced County Farm Bureau supports policies and legislation that promote and protect our Country's number one industry - agriculture for future generations and the security of our nation.

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Calendar of Events

December 24-December 31

Merced County Farm Bureau closed for Christmas and New Year's

December 31

Deadline to nominate for Golden Owl Award

January 11

Merced County YF&R Social

March 25

MCFB Annual Meeting

Merced County Farm News

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Johansson, top two officers are re-elected



California Farm Bureau President Jamie Johansson, left, joins First Vice President Shannon Douglass, center, and Second Vice President Shaun Crook. Delegates to the California Farm Bureau Annual Meeting re-elected the three statewide officers at their gathering in Garden Grove. Photo/Kevin Hecteman

By: Christine Souza, AgAlert

Butte County olive and citrus fruit grower Jamie Johansson has been re-elected to a third consecutive term as president of the California Farm Bureau.

The election took place at the organization's 103rd Annual Meeting Dec. 4-8, in Garden Grove, a conference in which Johansson hailed the contributions of member farmers and ranchers as critical to the Farm Bureau's success.

Johansson, First Vice President Shannon Douglass and Second Vice President Shaun Crook each ran unopposed and were re-elected by acclamation by the House of Delegates. All three were first voted into their posts in 2017.

Johansson is a former chairman of the California Young Farmers & Ranchers State Committee, a former vice president of the Butte County Farm Bureau and a former Oroville City Council member and vice mayor. He was elected California Farm Bureau second vice president in 2009 and first vice president in 2015.

"It's the highest honor to serve," Johansson told members of the Farm Bureau's House of Delegates following his election. He described the Farm Bureau as "stronger now than I've ever seen" and said members deserve "to celebrate this organization that you have created and the direction you are going."

In addressing Farm Bureau members during the meeting, Johansson emphasized the importance of engagement in the coming year on

issues facing agriculture.

"In agriculture there's going to be change, but it has to be directed by the experts and that is us in agriculture. That's the voice of Farm Bureau and American Farm Bureau. We need to direct our paths and stand up," Johansson said.

In referencing the conference theme, "Making it Possible," Johansson said the work of Farm Bureau is possible due to the grassroots efforts of the county and state Farm Bureaus and the American Farm Bureau Federation.

"It's possible when Farm Bureau puts its weight behind it, but we need to hear from you. We need to hear, particularly in your area, what we can do," he said. "We are social organization. It's time that California Farm Bureau put the boots back on the ground, in real time, walking the streets of Sacramento and in the hallways of Washington, D.C., and make a difference."

Johansson said, "The diversity of Farm Bureau is what makes us even better, because we are unified under one voice in doing what's best for agriculture."

Douglass and Crook were also elected to third consecutive terms. Douglass, of Orland, is an owner of Douglass Ranch, which raises beef cattle, sunflowers, pumpkins, corn and forage crops. She is also the founder of CalAgJobs, an online agricultural jobs site. She is a director of the Glenn County Farm Bureau and serves on the Glenn County Fair Board of Directors.

"I look forward to another term serving the members of California Farm Bureau," Douglass said. "While the challenges ahead are plenty, I know the work of Farm Bureau is critical to the future success of our farms, and I am proud to be part of that important work."

Crook is a vice president of a family timber business in Groveland and a real estate agent specializing in ranch, commercial and residential properties. He is a member of the Tuolumne County Alliance for Resources and Environment and a former president of the Tuolumne County Farm Bureau.

"It's been great to get to know the

members of this organization over the past four years, traveling across the state as officers and dealing with the issues facing us as California agriculture," Crook said. "I look forward to working for all of you and thank you for taking time away from your operations to be here."

Delegates returned a dozen members to the California Farm Bureau board: Ronnie Leimgruber of Holtville represents Imperial and San Diego counties; Richard Miner of Tehachapi represents Los Angeles and Orange counties; Brian Medeiros of Hanford represents Kern and Kings counties; Donny Rollin of Riverdale represents Fresno County; Jay Mahil of Madera represents Madera, Mariposa and Merced counties; Joe Martinez of Winters represents Alameda, Contra Costa and Solano counties; Ron Peterson of Hilmar represents Stanislaus and Tuolumne counties; Joe Fischer of Auburn represents Placer, Sacramento, El Dorado and Amador

counties; Clark Becker of Biggs represents Butte, Nevada and Yuba-Sutter counties; Johnnie White of Napa represents Marin, Napa and Sonoma counties; Taylor Hagata of Susanville represents Lassen, Modoc and Plumas-Sierra counties; and Ron Vevoda of Ferndale represents Del Norte and Humboldt counties.

Glenn County walnut farmer Jocelyn Anderson of Willows was selected to chair the Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee, succeeding State YF&R Committee Chair Lindsey Mebane of Kern County. San Diego County farmer Al Stehly of Valley Center was appointed to chair the Farm Bureau's Rural Health Committee.

Delegates also elected Marin County rancher Martin Pozzi of Tomales as an alternate delegate to the American Farm Bureau Federation Annual Convention next month in Atlanta. The Farm Bureau's three top leaders—Johansson, Douglass and Crook—will serve as delegates.

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Over 1,000 photographs from San Joaquin County, UC Cooperative Extension digitized at UC Merced Library

**By: Rebecca Gourevitch,
UC Merced Library**

The California Agricultural Resources Archive (CARA) team has made great progress in recent months to digitize and make accessible the UC Cooperative Extension Archive. Working in collaboration with the San Joaquin County Historical Society and Museum, we digitized 1,051 photographs as part of the University of California Agricultural Cooperative Extension, San Joaquin County, Collection.

Included in this set of photographic material are sixty-eight nitrate negatives. A type of cellulose film in production from the late 1800s to the 1950s, nitrate is especially prone to deterioration and highly flammable when deterioration is underway. Nitrate is exceedingly rare in archival collections but when present, it is important that proper handling and storage techniques are followed so that it does not pose a danger to people and surrounding collections. Due to the unique conditions of nitrate film, we sent this material to Gawain Weaver Art Conservation in Marin County for digitization. The film was placed in a freezer located in the UC Merced Library upon return for long-term storage.

Storing nitrate negatives in frozen conditions ensures that the original documents remain accessible for years to come. The remaining photographic materials are prints and

were digitized in-house at the library by UC Cooperative Extension Project Digitization Coordinator Jonathan Wilcox, as well as several student assistants.

Featured below is an assortment of photographs found in the University of California Agricultural Cooperative Extension, San Joaquin County, Collection. Spanning the years 1917 through 1991 (though many are undated), the images found in this collection present events such as home and farm demonstrations and 4-H activities, summer camps and livestock competitions.

A photograph from 1920 shows a large Farm Bureau meeting to cultivate the organization. Another photograph from 1920 depicts a group of women posing in front of their clothing project, one of the home economic programs headed by UCCE.

Two prints from 1922 illustrate farm demonstrations and cooperative projects as farm advisors worked to deploy techniques generated at the agricultural experiment stations throughout rural communities. Other images show 4-H activities, including a summer camp scene in which young people enjoy time at Lake Strawberry.

The years during WWII experienced labor shortages across the country and some of the images convey the lack of field workers in the Central Valley in the mid-1940s. Both farm workers from Mexico and students from across the state were recruited to toil the fields during the war.



Student volunteer peach cutters from Stockton, 1944
University of California Agricultural Cooperative Extension, San Joaquin County, Collection
UC Merced, UC Cooperative Extension Archive



Development of Farm Bureau Organization annual meeting, 1920
University of California Agricultural Cooperative Extension, San Joaquin County, Collection,
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California Farm Bureau Legislative Update

By: **CAFB**

December 10, 2021 Agricultural Technology and Economic Development

On December 1, 2021, the Assembly Select Committee on Technology and the Future of California's Agricultural Workforce, chaired by Assembly member Carlos Villapudua, held a hearing titled "Agricultural Technology Workforce – An Overview". Experts from University of California Agricultural and Natural Resources and other organizations discussed adoption of agricultural technology in California and educational pathways to agricultural technology careers. Information about the hearing can be found here here. Those that would like to rewatch the hearing can visit the Assembly video archives to watch the hearing here.

Appointments

On December 9, 2021 the Biden Administration announced the appointment of Martha Guzman Aceves as the Region 9 administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. For the past five years, Guzman Aceves has been a member of the California Public Utilities Commission. She also previously served as a Deputy for agricultural issues in Governor Brown's administration. Region 9 oversees implementation and enforcement of federal environmental laws in California, Arizona, Nevada, Hawaii, Pacific islands, and 148 tribal nations across the southwest.

Climate Change

The Environmental Justice Advisory Committee to the Air Resources Board will be meeting on Tuesday, December 14th from 1-5pm. The group will be discussing the 2022 Scoping Plan Update and proposed recommendations on pesticide use, working lands' negative emission strategies, and dairy methane. Information about the meeting including an agenda and the zoom link can be found here. The Environmental Justice Advisory Committee is responsible for making recommendations to the Air Resources Board.

Commodities

The Industrial Hemp Advisory Board will be meeting on December

16th from 10am to 2pm virtually. The Board will be discussing outstanding regulations and fees to support the program. Information about the agenda items and how you can participate can be found here.

Pest Management

The Department of Food and Agriculture has extended the deadline for the Biologically Integrated Farming Systems (BIFS) grant program from December 6, 2021 to December 20, 2021. These grant projects demonstrate IPM-based alternative pest management options that focus on economical and efficacious biological and cultural pest management techniques accessible to growers. For more information, interested applications can visit the BIFS webpage.

Water

The Department of Water Resources has issued letters to the Groundwater Sustainable Agencies representing the remaining six subbasins within the San Joaquin Valley on the status of their groundwater sustainability plans. The basins are:

- Delta Mendota
- Kaweah
- Kern County
- Kings
- Tule
- Tulare Lake

The deficiencies they have are consistent with the deficiencies the Department described in the Tier 1 & 2 evaluations. The letters identify deficiencies that need to be addressed, thus giving these agencies an early opportunity to prepare the resources and staffing necessary to correct their plans once assessments are provided to the agencies in January 2022. After the final assessments are released, the agencies will have 180 days to address deficiencies. The letters can be found on the Department's SGMA Portal. For questions, please contact the Sustainable Groundwater Management Office by emailing sgmps@water.ca.gov.

Wildfire and Forestry

On December 7, 2021, the Assembly Budget Subcommittee 3 on Climate Crisis, Resources, Energy, and Transportation, chaired by Assembly member Richard Bloom, held an Informational Hearing on Wildfire Prevention and Forest Resiliency. State agencies presented 2020-21 and 2021-22 budget commitments, and

early action spending. Experts from Cal Forest and other organizations discussed forest health and resiliency strategies. Presentations from the Legislative Analyst's Office and the California Natural Resources Agency are available online at the Committee's website here here, and the hearing can be viewed here.

Wildlife

Gray Wolf Update

On November 10, OR93 was found dead near Interstate 5 near the town of Lebec, California. Following a full investigation and necropsy, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has determined that the wolf died from trauma consistent with vehicular strike and does not suspect foul play. The wolf had significant tissue trauma to the left rear leg and a dislocated knee as well as soft tissue trauma to the abdomen. The injuries were deemed to be caused by a vehicle strike. OR93 was a male wolf born in 2019. As Friday review readers might remember, he dispersed from the White River pack in Northern Oregon. When his collar was providing information, he was tracked entering Modoc County on January 30, 2021. After briefly returning to Oregon, he reentered Modoc County on February 4. On February 24, he entered Alpine County after passing through portions of Lassen, Plumas, Sierra, Nevada, Placer, El Dorado, Amador and Calaveras counties. On February 25, he

entered Mono County. In mid-March, he was in western Tuolumne County. By late March he was in Fresno County, and then entered San Benito County after crossing Highway 99 and Interstate 5. He was in Monterey County on April 1 and his last collar transmission was from San Luis Obispo County on April 5. Through April 5 he had traveled at least 935 air miles in California, a minimum average of 16 air miles per day. Young gray wolves can disperse very long distances from their natal area and OR93 is no exception. Before his demise, he was documented traveling the farthest south in California since wolves returned to the state, which is historically wolf habitat. The last documented wolf that far south was captured in San Bernardino County in 1922. This past month, producers have been plagued by recent wolf attacks in Northern California. Multiple confirmed depredation reports have been filed and attributed to, OR103, OR85, and LAS09F. Injuries consistent with wolf attacks, wolf DNA, and GPS collar data have been cited as evidence in these reports. OR103, reportedly, has been injured which may be the cause for the increase in livestock attacks. Farm Bureau continues to work with the Department and stakeholders on this issue. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact CAFB staff. More information is available on CDFW's wolf page.



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House passes bill to strengthen shipping supply chain

By: Joseph Choi, The Hill

The House on Wednesday passed a bipartisan bill designed to strengthen shipping supply chains as ongoing infrastructure issues continue to exacerbate inflation and slow the economic recovery.

The Ocean Shipping Reform Act was passed in the House in a 364-60 vote.

The bill, introduced in August by California Rep. John Garamendi (D), requires shipping companies to adhere to "minimum service standards that meet the public interest" and blocks them from unreasonably declining cargo.

"This is just one of several bills that we will pass that build on the success of the bipartisan infrastructure

law. In there, there are billions of dollars — \$17 billion, in fact — for ports and waterways, for commerce to run more smoothly," Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said of the bill on Wednesday.

Under the legislation, shipping carriers and port operators are barred from retaliating against a shipper, a shipper's agent or a motor carrier by threatening to withhold available cargo space.

Improved data collection and reporting practices will also be put in place under the bill, through the creation of a shipping exchange registry. It will also increase Federal Maritime Commission (FMC) funding by 10 percent and directs the FMC to release an annual report on shipping operators and marine terminal operators filing false certifications.

The passage of this bill comes about one month after the House passed the Build Back Better Act, which included \$5 billion for identifying and resolving supply chain issues that threaten economic security. Last week, a group of more than 20 House Democrats called for further legislation addressing supply chain issues to be passed.

"As our constituents gather for the holiday season, it is imperative Congress acts to address the needs of the nation through additional action to specifically address the supply chain and resulting higher prices experienced by families across the country," said the lawmakers, including Democratic Reps. Cindy Axne (Iowa), Susie Lee (Nev.) and Susan Wild (Pa.).

"I'm pleased that House leadership heeded my call for additional legislative action that tackles the

wide range of challenges posed by supply chain disruptions," Axne said Wednesday evening, lambasting foreign shipping companies for "squeezing Iowa farmers."

The centrist Democratic Blue Dog Coalition celebrated the passage of the Ocean Shipping Reform Act as a "bipartisan victory."

"This legislation works to address unfair shipping practices by tackling the worst instances of abuse from bad actors in the shipping industry in an effort to boost our country's global competitiveness," Rep. Kurt Schrader (D-Ore.), a member of the coalition, said in a statement.

"The Senate should pass this critical, broadly-supported legislation without delay to resolve the supply chain struggles impacting Americans," he added.

Citizenship

continued from page 1

citizenship eligibility reviews for farm employees, application preparation and case management. The partnership will also provide referrals for legal reviews of citizenship petitions.

Farm Bureau and the Immigration Forum will create an online portal to encourage eligible immigrants to apply for U.S. citizenship. Applicants will be responsible for \$725 in immigration fees, though some may qualify for fee waivers based on financial hardship.

According to recent Department of Homeland Security estimates, an estimated 13.9 million green-card holders lived in the U.S. with lawful resident status in 2019. As many as 9.2 million were eligible to apply to become naturalized U.S. citizens.

California Farm Bureau President Jamie Johansson praised the partnership as an important step for farmers, ranchers and agricultural employees.

"Farm Bureau has long supported measures to improve the lives of California's farm employees, including

furnishing opportunities for those who are present in the United States with legal status as they engage in the critical work of producing food for California and the world," Johansson said. "Offering farm employees who are eligible for U.S. citizenship a low-cost means to access citizenship puts them on a path to fully share in the American bounty they work every day to create."

Since 2013, the National Immigration Forum has worked with some of America's largest employers to help more than 10,000 employees and their family members become citizens.

The NIF's New America Workforce venture pledges to "integrate new Americans into the U.S. labor market and improve their opportunities to thrive." The venture includes a corporate immigrant integration roundtable, with participants including Tyson Foods Inc., Driscoll's, Walmart, Target Corp., Marriott International and others.

"We value our relationship with California Farm Bureau," said Emily Foster, vice president of corporate engagement at the National Immigration Forum. "The mission of the National Immigration Forum and New American Workforce is to assist immigrants who are eligible to access

the benefits of full U.S. citizenship, and we are grateful to California Farm Bureau for giving us access to nearly 31,000 Farm Bureau members whose employees can benefit from the services we offer."

The California Farm Bureau is a supporter of the federal Farm Workforce Modernization Act of 2021, which would reform the agricultural guestworker program and provide a path to legal status for farm employees.

"We have joined with worker advocates like the United Farm Workers calling for this program because we know that workers who are working legally in the U.S. or who have gained citizenship are empowered workers who can make choices for themselves and their families," Johansson said. "Giving California agriculture's employees legal status and citizenship gives them a full stake in the American dream, and that's good for our farms, our communities and for America."

The Farm Workforce Modernization Act could lead to immigration protections for many of the estimated 45% of agricultural workers who are currently undocumented.

However, the partnership between the Farm Bureau and the National Immigration Forum focuses on legal

workers with green cards who want full benefits of citizenship.

The citizenship application process will be confidential. Only legal providers who consult with and screen farm employees will see their application details.

To ease fears of some farm employees, no citizenship petitions will be forwarded to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services if the applicants don't qualify.

"We have these privacy safeguards in place to ensure that none of the personal information is going to be shared with anyone," said Helena Coric, manager of immigration programs for the Immigration Forum.

She said the program also intends to protect workers who may be targeted by disreputable services falsely promising them legal status. Meanwhile, it will help those who are eligible toward their ultimate goal—citizenship.

"This offers them the opportunity, once they become citizens, to become more civically engaged," Coric said. "They won't have to worry about renewing green cards. They won't have to worry about being deported. Citizenship provides the sense of security that no other immigration benefit does."

Breaking Through Together

By: Gabriella Butticci, Merced FFA

With the holiday season approaching, Merced FFA is thankful for the opportunity to come together and celebrate the accomplishments of our members! Reconnecting with others, our advisors took 11 students to attend the Merced Mariposa Sectional Game Night hosted at Buhach Colony High School. There, we met with 14 different chapters throughout the Merced-Mariposa section and even met the state officers. There were many opportunities for friendly competition, and a crowd favorite was "Ag Olympics," consisting of wheelbarrow racing, hay bale flipping, feed sack holding, and more. A sophomore attendee, Charli A., says, "I had a great time dancing, spending time with friends from other chapters, and almost dumping Gabby

out of a wheelbarrow. It was a great experience, and I would do it again." Thank you to all who attended, and we can't wait for the next one!

On Tuesday, November 16, our chapter hosted our Greenhand Banquet. Beginning with a favorite tradition of "Donuts and Hand Dyeing," where members got to dye their hands green or blue according to the degree received. As members continued their day, they took advantage of their attention getter to explain why they dyed their hands and FFA's opportunities. We recognized many students at the banquet for their involvement, Greenhand and Chapter Degrees, Scholastic Awards (having a 3.5 or higher GPA), and finally, the announcement of your 2021-22 Greenhand Officer team. We are proud of the individuals who ran and the hard work and dedication these freshmen

have already exhibited. In addition, we want to congratulate Laura M. -Historian, Breana E. -Sentinel, Christian S. Treasurer, Naomi S. -Reporter, Corrina S. -Secretary, Madyson W. -Vice President, and Preslee H. -President. We are excited to see what the future holds for you! Finally, the Chapter and Greenhand

officers took a trip down "Holiday Aggie Lane," hosted by Merced College Agriculture Ambassadors. Our officers met new people from the section and competed in a Christmas tree decorating contest and a Christmas Caroling contest. The time spent bonding are memories that will always be cherished.



Merced FFA officers at "Holiday Aggie Lane"

Gustine FFA Members take part in Annual Sectional Project Competition Contest

By: Garret Gomes, Gustine FFA Reporter

Each year Gustine FFA students participate in the Sectional Project Competition. This year Gustine FFA had eight students participate in the contest. The competition took place on December 2nd and was put on by Merced College.

Project Competition is a contest in FFA, where students show off their SAE and work experience projects. Students must present a 15-minute presentation and demonstration of their project, and then they answer questions from the judges.

This year Kaitlin Dores, Savanna Barcellos, Tyler Borba, Garret Gomes, Mikayla Silveira, Austin Bell, Emma Woods, and Lucero Ponce competed.

Kaitlin Dores informed the judges about how CIDRs function when being used to breed cattle.

Savanna Barcellos demonstrated how to draw blood from her goats to

perform blood testing.

Tyler Borba talked about what the hay making industry looks like.

Garret Gomes informed the judges about what the sausage making process looks like.

Mikayla Silveira demonstrated what milking cows entails.

Austin Bell talked about stock management for artificial insemination.

Emma Woods shared with the judges the processes of seedling trays for planting in a greenhouse.

Lucero Ponce demonstrated how she uses beeswax for making homemade candles.

Lucero Ponce, a senior who participated in Project Competition, showcasing making candles with beeswax shared, "Participating in project competition again was one of the best decisions I made and I am grateful for all the feedback I received on my project."

In February students will receive feedback and awards for their competition at an awards banquet

hosted at the Merced Fairgrounds. Awards include Gold, Silver, or Bronze, Outstanding Project, and Scholarships.

Gustine FFA would like to thank the judges for judging the competition and wish the best of luck to our members that participated in the contest.



Kaitlin Dores is pictured informing the judges about using CIDRs for breeding cattle.

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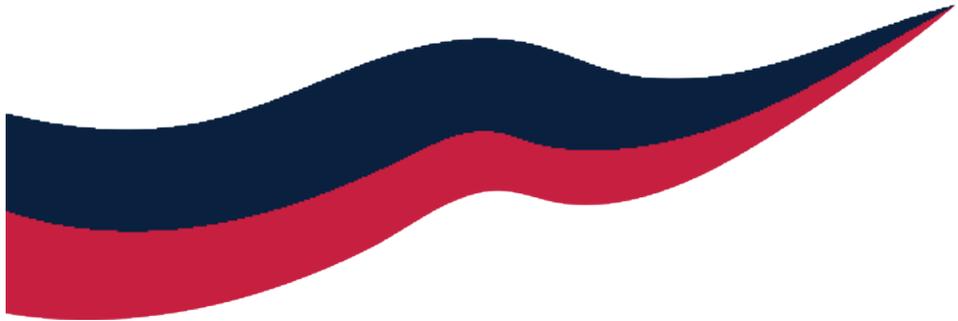
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Congress clears \$2.5T debt limit increase, forestalling economic fallout

By: Jennifer Scholtes and Caitlin Emma, Politico

The House passed a measure late Tuesday night to raise the debt limit to nearly \$31 trillion, sending the legislation to President Joe Biden in time to prevent an economically devastating default.

The chamber voted 221-209 to pass the measure, a move expected to save the Treasury Department from fully exhausting its ability to pay interest on the nation's \$29 trillion in loans — a crisis that could hit as soon as Wednesday. The final passage vote ends more than four months of economic uncertainty as the two parties sparred over how to handle the borrowing cap after the nation's two-year debt waiver expired at the end of July.

The debt limit increase will "spare families the pain of a catastrophic default" and "uphold the full faith and credit" of the United States, Speaker Nancy Pelosi said before the final vote.

The measure would increase the debt limit by \$2.5 trillion, a sum

expected to last into 2023 without the need for another vote to raise the borrowing cap. That would get Democrats through the midterm elections next year before having to hike the ceiling again.

Earlier Tuesday, Senate Democrats advanced the measure on their own through simple-majority votes, thanks to the bipartisan accord Minority Leader Mitch McConnell struck with Majority Leader Chuck Schumer.

"Responsible governing has won on this exceedingly important issue," Schumer said on the Senate floor Tuesday. "The American people can breathe easy and rest assured there will not be a default."

The party-line vote did not sit well with every Democrat, however. Georgia Sen. Raphael Warnock said he "wrestled" with the issue over the weekend, arguing that the same filibuster-proof status should be applied to stalled voting rights legislation. He ultimately supported the debt limit hike.

While Schumer noted that action

to raise the nation's borrowing cap "is about paying debt accumulated by both parties," Republicans continue to characterize the debt limit increase as a way for Democrats to facilitate more deficit spending, which GOP lawmakers say will drive further inflation.

"Washington Democrats' printing, borrowing and spending addiction is directly hurting American families," McConnell said on the floor Tuesday. "If they jam through another reckless taxing-and-spending spree, this massive debt increase will just be the beginning."

The Kentucky Republican pinned responsibility for raising the country's borrowing limit on his counterparts across the aisle. But the minority leader helped facilitate the debt limit increase by offering enough Republican support to grant Democrats a one-time reprieve from the filibuster to allay the debt issue, a measure that passed the Senate with 14 GOP votes last week.

For decades, action on the debt

limit was considered a responsibility lawmakers from both parties should shoulder together, since the borrowing is the result of policies enacted under GOP and Democratic control alike.

However, Republicans are now rejecting any onus for preventing the country from hitting the limit. Instead, they argue, Democrats should own the debt burden alone since they have embraced the budget reconciliation process to pass trillions of dollars in new spending this year without GOP support.

The sheer size of the national debt is also a sticking point for many Republicans.

Sen. Bill Hagerty (R-Tenn.) said he is "extraordinarily concerned" to see the debt limit hiked beyond \$30 trillion for the first time in U.S. history, and "to see the debt going up to a level that exceeds our GDP."

The United States' debt has for several years eclipsed the nation's gross domestic product, which topped \$23 trillion in the Commerce Department's latest count.

Signs of improvement in the battle to eradicate nutria

By: Rich Rodriguez, Fox26News

The battle to eliminate a destructive swamp rat in Central California waterways is showing signs of improvement.

However, a state biologist says declaring victory is still years away.

Since 2017 the State Department of Fish and Wildlife has tracked the nutria from Stockton to Mendota. It's a very destructive rodent that can tunnel through rivers, ponds, and wetlands creating all kinds of problems.

State biologist Greg Gerstenberg started the nutria eradication team in 2017. "The Merced River and the grasslands are probably the best habitat for nutria so it's our goal to remove them from those locations and systematically reduce the number of nutria."

Here's how things have progressed: Twenty nutria trapped and euthanized in the final months of 2017. A year later it climbed to 348, 489 in 2019, 1242 in 2020, and this year the number finally took a downward trend at 674.

"We still need to stay high with our

effort and keep them from spreading into new places where they can really explode."

Last summer Gerstenberg's team focused on the Mendota area to see if swamp rats were moving into Fresno County.

"We did remove several nutria from Mendota... Mendota slough and wildlife area. So they are present not in huge numbers that we know of yet but again our priority areas are mainly to the north."

The biggest stumbling block for Fish and Wildlife is getting access

to private property where nutria are repopulating. He says some landowners are difficult to contact because they live out of state, others are reluctant to work with the government.

In four years the nutria herd has been reduced by nearly 2800 but Gerstenberg says eradication is still years away.

Nutria were originally brought to California in the 1800's for the fur trade. It never took off.

In the 1970's the state declared that nutria had been eradicated.

Once perceived as a problem, conservation grazing by cattle a boon to vernal pools

By: Mike Hsu, UC ANR

Giving 1,200-pound cows access to one of California's most fragile and biologically rich ecosystems seems a strange way to protect its threatened and endangered species.

But a recently published study suggests that reintroducing low to moderate levels of cattle grazing around vernal pools – under certain conditions – leads to a greater number and greater variety of native plants.

“We found that after 40 years of rest from grazing, reintroducing conservation grazing had – across the board – positive impacts on vernal pool plant diversity,” said Julia Michaels, a visiting professor at Reed College who led a three-year study in a Sacramento-area reserve during her time as a UC Davis Ph.D. student.

Ecologists consider vernal pools – ephemeral ponds that form seasonally – “islands of native habitat” amid California's grasslands that are dominated by exotic grasses. These biodiversity hotspots harbor about 200 native species of animals and plants, such as the coyote thistle, which germinates under water and forms a snorkel-like straw to deliver oxygen to its roots – and then “fills in” its stem as the pool dries.

Specially adapted to survive in those stages of wet and dry, many of these species are found only in vernal pools scattered across California – making those pools an urgent priority for conservationists.

“It's estimated that more than 90% of the original vernal pools in California have been destroyed due to agriculture and urban development, so management of those remaining – including those that have been re-created – is of high concern,” said Valerie Eviner, a UC Davis plant sciences professor and UC Agriculture and Natural Resources affiliate. Eviner is a co-author of the study, along with UC Davis colleague Kenneth Tate, UC Cooperative Extension specialist.

During the 1970s and 1980s, vernal pools were fenced off in parts of the state, in the hopes of protecting the flora and fauna from grazing cattle. In the early 2000s, however, UC Davis researcher Jaymee Marty found that grazing was actually crucial to vernal pool biodiversity: once livestock were

removed from areas that had been grazed historically, the diversity of plants plummeted.

“Her research was critical to rethinking the best ways to protect the diversity in California's vernal pool ecosystems,” Eviner said.

The Michaels-led study, published in the *Journal of Applied Biology*, builds on Marty's work, by looking at scenarios where cattle had been blocked from vernal pools for decades, and then observes the rate at which biodiversity returns after reintroduction of the animals. Michaels said she wanted to provide some initial answers to the practical questions that ranchers and land managers have in potentially reintroducing cattle.

“A lot of them had these areas that had been fenced off from grazing for the last 20–30 years, and they were very concerned about what happens if we let cattle back onto these vernal pool grasslands – are there going to be negative impacts because that land had been at rest for a few decades?” Michaels explained.

In their study within the Sacramento Valley, the researchers focused on transition zones – the “battlegrounds” between vernal pool native species and the encroaching invasive grasses, where they are able to detect most readily the effects of disturbances such as grazing.

They discovered that, after reintroducing cattle to areas that had been fenced off since the 1970s, there was a greater abundance of native flora (species like the vernal pool buttercup, bractless hedge-hyssop and bristled downingia), as well as increased diversity among the plants (both in number of species and in how evenly distributed they were).

“Encouragingly, diversity is rapidly restored,” Eviner said, “providing conservationists with strong data to show that rapid action can enhance plant diversity.”

And as for potential worries about cattle making a snack of vernal pool plants, Michaels and her colleagues observed that the cattle appear to be more interested in munching on grasses.

“Anecdotally, we saw very few signs of herbivory on the vernal pool species because the timing is such that [the plants] are underwater for a good

part of the late winter and early spring, and then by the time they're blooming, there's plenty of good forage around for the cattle,” Michaels said.

In fact, the cattle seem to be performing a function filled for millennia by native grazers (namely, the once-abundant tule elk), helping to knock down vernal pool species' chief competitor in those transition zones: the grasses.

Although the researchers were concerned about a loss of biodiversity, excessive nutrients in the ponds due to defecation and harmful compaction of “fluffy” soil, none of their worries materialized on the test sites where grazing was reintroduced.

Instead, microdepressions created by the cattle appeared to encourage the proliferation of native plants. Each hoofprint became a miniature basin – “a vernal pool within a vernal pool.”

“Right in those transition zones, where they could be hosting either

the vernal pool species or the upland grasses, just a couple centimeters of soil topography can make a big difference,” Michaels explained. “If a cow comes and steps in that transition zone, and that lowers the soil surface so it stays inundated a little longer, you end up seeing these pockets of vernal pool species that are able to persist.”

Michaels is currently conducting a follow-up study on the hoofprints to pinpoint their role in boosting native plant abundance and biodiversity. Because the prints can last for several years, they might be able to deliver some enduring benefits – and land managers might not have to bring cattle in to graze the pools as often.

“If it's really the hoofprints making the big difference, maybe we don't need to graze every year – only during certain times of year when we know the hoofprints will form well and harden, and then we're good for a few years,” Michaels said.

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Dept. of Fair Employment & Housing Announced Stepped-up FCA Enforcement

By: Bryan Little, Farm Employers Labor Service

December 10, 2021 - In October 2021, the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing (“DFEH”) announced stepped up efforts to enforce the Fair Chance Act (FCA), enacted in January 2018 and commonly known as California’s “ban-the-box” law. It amended the Fair Employment and Housing Act (“FEHA”) to prohibit employers with five or more employees from directly or indirectly inquiring into, seeking the disclosure of, or considering an applicant’s conviction history (including questions on a job application) until after the applicant receives a conditional offer of employment.

The FCA limits on the types of statements employers can make in

job postings and advertisements, prohibiting employers from publicizing that they will not consider applicants with a criminal history. Posting and help-wanted ads stating, “No Felons” or “Must Have Clean Record” are forbidden by FCA. These and similar statements violate the Act’s requirement that employers consider an applicant’s criminal history individually, and to also consider any mitigating information provided by the applicant that might indicate that the applicant’s criminal history may not be relevant to position the employer is seeking to fill.

DFEH employs sophisticated data technology to find potential FCA violations in job postings and advertisements. DFEH recently found over 500 advertisements containing unlawful statements that the employer would not consider job applicants with a criminal record in single day. DFEH documented these violations and sent notices to the employers to remove the unlawful statements.

DFEH has also released a Fair Chance Act Toolkit and plans to release an interactive training and online application in 2022 to assist employers with compliance, including:

- Sample forms;
- DFEH guidance;
- A suggested wording for job advertisements and postings;
- FAQs about the Fair Chance Act; and,
- An informational video.

FELS also offers FCA-compliant employment application forms in English and Spanish in pads of 25 in its supply catalog. Employers should review their materials, advertisements, and job postings for possible violations of the FCA. The cost of FCA non-compliance can be high; FCA allows employees who have suffered a violation of the law to file claims with the DFEH and pursue remedies including compensatory damages, punitive damages, and attorney’s fees.

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Taking a Stand

The Story of the Fiorini Ranch

By: California Farmland Trust

In 1909, long before cities were formed, third generation farmer, Randy Fiorini's grandparents Francis and Mable made the life-changing move from Southern California to our most fertile soil, the Central Valley, putting roots down in Merced County, between what is now Turlock and Delhi.

To say they started with nothing is an understatement. Like many settlers, the Fiorini's farm began with a small herd of dairy cows on a piece of dry-farmed land.

"If it hadn't been for his wife, Mabel, Francis wouldn't have known how to hook up the horses to the plow," Randy said jokingly about his grandfather.

Today, Fiorini Ranch is farmed and managed by Randy and the fourth generations of Fiorinis; his children Jay Fiorini and Stacy Parker. With over 100 years of farming history, the ranch has endured vast changes. In 1922, the original 360-acre homestead was divided among the two boys of the family. With his portion, Randy's father diversified into wine grapes and stone fruit orchards, which they farmed for several years before eventually phasing out into solely almond, walnut, and peach orchards.

Given the family's deep farming history, Randy naturally followed in the footsteps of the generations before him. He recalled starting to work hand-in-hand with his father at age 10, and like many farm kids, completed some of the least desirable farm tasks, such as rubber mallets to knock the nuts off the trees. Randy remembered a conversation with his father who expressed, "Unless you do all these jobs, you'll never be a good farmer."

Randy attended Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, receiving a bachelor's degree in fruit science. Before he graduated, he bought his first 60-acre farm next door to the family's original homestead ranch. At the time, some friends and family questioned his judgment because the ground had been stripped of topsoil.

"Most people around here didn't think it was farmable," Randy said. "The price was so cheap. I went to the Farmers Home Administration and they gave me a start-up loan. That's really the piece of property I got

started on in 1973. Needless to say, we're almost 48 years into it and it's become very productive farmland."

The transformation didn't happen overnight and reiterated Randy's long-term commitment to the land. Healthy soil-building practices, such as compost and manure applications, as well as water-use efficiency technologies like microsprinklers are all utilized. The land is now in its third planting of almonds. Randy said this 60-acre property is near to his heart because it is adjacent to the ground where his grandparents started their farming journey and is the first ground he ever owned.

After graduating from college, Randy returned to the family operation, took over all farm management decisions, and by large, grew the nut side of the business. The ranch collectively grew to over 700 acres, and today they farm more than 500 acres of almonds and approximately 100 acres of walnuts and peaches.

Taking a Stand

More recently, generational farming is a topic that has been extensively discussed among the Fiorinis. In recent years, Randy has witnessed encroachment by urban development, record-breaking land prices, and increased production costs – all factors that just don't pencil out for the farmer.

The lure of development is near and threatening, and with Fiorini Ranch's close proximity to major highways and towns, the farm's potential to be paved over is daunting.

Two of Randy's neighbors with farms also in the path to be developed, acted against this threat, and placed their farmland under agricultural conservation easements

(ACE) with California Farmland Trust (CFT).

The easement consists of a legal transaction between the landowner and land trust, where the landowner voluntarily sells or donates the development rights of their property to the land trust. The farm continues to be owned and operated by the owner, while simultaneously being forever protected.

"I inquired with my neighbors about the experience, and they were all very favorable and felt like it was one of the best decisions they've ever made," Randy said. After sitting on the idea, he proposed the possibility of an ACE to his children, to which they responded with great eagerness.

"Growing up here and being surrounded by family history, it's important for us to have this land for future generations," Stacy said. Jay added, "I want to preserve this core farmland that exists and hope it can provide opportunities for our kids and even their kids."

Nearby Development Threats

Starting with the protection of the 60-acre property with an agriculture conservation easement (ACE), will not only ensure the farm remains in agriculture, but Randy said he hoped to send a message to area developers and

encourage other nearby landowners to follow suit.

"The threat is from Delhi," he said. "In most valley communities, they grow up around (Highway) 99. Delhi has been growing to the west, and land development opportunities that exist now to the east, I think, are more attractive to land developers. So, 160 acres adjacent to Delhi that we're located next to are likely to be the first to go. And the landowner is eager to sell."

"We're right on the edge of the Delhi sphere of influence. I think we want to signal to Merced County planning department, that they should not think about residential housing development beyond this line that we're trying to form," Randy added.

Charlotte Mitchell, executive director at CFT agreed, adding the Fiorini project complements the more than 11,000 acres that CFT has already permanently protected in Merced County. "Some of the most productive farmland located in Merced County is also under threat for urban development," she said. "It's important we strategically invest in protecting sustainable farmland that provides

See 'Fiorini Ranch' Page 14



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Fiorini Ranch

continued from page 13

food and benefits the environment.”

“With urbanization creeping closer, land prices have skyrocketed to the point that purchasing a piece to farm doesn’t pencil out,” Fiorini said. “Potential buyers are either willing to shell out for 3- to 4-acre ranchettes or they are developers who plan to split the property for housing. The high prices also prove enticing to farmers looking to retire.”

Protect Fiorini Ranch Campaign

Currently, the Fiorinis are pursuing an agricultural conservation easement with California Farmland Trust on the 60-acre almond orchard that Randy first purchased. When applying for ACE grant funding, raising match funds is becoming a common

requirement, Randy explained.

An application was submitted to the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC), a collaborative grant funding program between the California Department of Conservation (DOC) and the California Strategic Growth Council (SGC). The program will fund 75% of the cost needed for the Fiorinis’ easement. CFT was successfully awarded grant funding in November of 2021 and are now working on securing the remaining funds.

The remaining 25%, approximately \$165,000, must be provided by other sources. To fulfill the 25%, CFT pursued a match funding grant with the Henry Mayo Newhall Foundation, which has a long history of supporting communities and agriculture throughout California.

“When we found out that they would consider funding an agricultural conservation easement, we prepared

a presentation for their board,” Randy said. “They liked what we were trying to do and pledged to provide match funding.”

The Newhalls agreed to provide up to \$80,000 to fund the Fiorinis easement, leaving it up to Randy, his family, and CFT to find the remaining funds. Over two years, the Protect Fiorini Ranch campaign is being conducted by CFT to raise \$85,000 for the Fiorinis easement project. With nearly half the funds already raised, come the end of 2022, CFT must raise the remaining \$45,000.

Being Part of the Solution

While the primary purpose of these funds will be dedicated to protecting Fiorini Ranch, the Fiorinis articulated the bigger picture to be far more valuable.

“The single biggest need in California is to create an awareness about the importance of agriculture,” Randy expressed. “We’re in a position

to draw a line and become the buffer between urbanization and agriculture. You don’t have to go more than about 80 miles west and see what’s happened to the Santa Clara Valley. It could happen here, and that would be a shame.”

If completed, Fiorini Ranch will be the 27th ACE within a 10-mile radius of their farm. The Fiorinis hope this buffer will stimulate conversation with policymakers resulting in more funding, and they hope to increase landowner dialogue to take action in protecting their own farms.

“Our neighbors influenced us to move in this direction, and we will likely influence others,” Randy said. “If we’re going to preserve agriculture in California, the Central Valley is the last stand. If this falls, then kiss California agriculture goodbye.”

To learn more about this project, visit www.cafarmtrust.org/protect-fiorini-ranch.

Increases in Minimum Wage¹ Increases in Minimum Monthly Salary of Exempt Managers/Supervisors² Phase In of Overtime Thresholds for Non-Exempt Agricultural Employees³

Year	Employers with 26 or more employees at any time during a pay period (“large employers”)				Employers with 25 or fewer employees at all times during a pay period (“small employers”)			
	Minimum Wage (\$/hour)	Maximum hours/workday at regular rate	Maximum hours/workweek at regular rate	Minimum Exempt Employee Salary (\$/month)	Minimum Wage (\$/hour)	Maximum hours/workday at regular rate	Maximum hours/workweek at regular rate	Minimum Exempt Employee Salary (\$/month)
2017	10.50	10	N/A	3,640	10	10	N/A	3,467
2018	11	10	N/A	3,814	10.50	10	N/A	3,640
2019	12	9.5	55	4,160	11	10	N/A	3,814
2020	13	9	50	4,507	12	10	N/A	4,160
2021	14	8.5	45	4,854	13	10	N/A	4,507
2022	15	8*	40	5,200	14	9.5	55	4,854
2023	15	8*	40	5,200	15	9.0	50	5,200
2024	15 ↑	8*	40	5,200 ↑	15 ↑	8.5	45	5,200 ↑
2025	15 ↑	8*	40	5,200 ↑	15 ↑	8*	40	5,200 ↑

*Double time after 12 hours

↑Starting on 1/1/24, the minimum wage will be adjusted annually for increases (capped at 3.5%) in the U.S. Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers.

Premium Pay Rates: The overtime premium rate is 1½ times an employee’s regular rate of pay, except it is double an employee’s regular rate of pay for hours worked beyond 12 in a workday starting on 1/1/22 for employees of large employers and 1/1/25 for employees of small employers.

7th-Day Overtime: A nonexempt employee must be compensated at a rate that is not less than

- 1½ times the employee’s regular rate of pay for the first 8 hours worked on the 7th day of work in a workweek.
- Double the employee’s regular rate of pay for hours worked over 8 on the 7th day of work in a workweek.

Exemptions: Irrigators, shepherders, and commercial fishing vessel crew members lose their overtime-exempt status and are entitled to be compensated for overtime work as shown above starting on 1/1/19 if employed by a large employer and 1/1/22 if employed by a small employer.

¹ Cal. Labor Code § 1182.12.

² Cal. Labor Code § 515.

³ Cal. Labor Code §§ 860-862; draft update of Industrial Welfare Commission Order No. 14-2001.

Daniel Ledford

September 3, 1929 - November 7, 2021

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Merced, California - The family of Daniel Ledford said goodbye to him as he passed away on early Sunday morning, November the 7th. He was 92 and lived in his home in Merced County

for 70 years. He will be remembered as a veteran of the Korean War serving in the United States Air Force. In his later years he was a member of the Farm Bureau and Boar Goat Association. He was proud of becoming a member of the Merced County old times.

He was preceded in death by his wife of 68 years Harriet Louise Ledford. He is survived by his three sons of whom he was very proud, Tim

Ledford of Merced, Tom Ledford of Atwater and Tracy Ledford of Winton. He also has 7 grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren.

His service will be held at the Snelling Cemetery at 2:30 pm on November 15, 2021, with a visitation before at Stratford Evans Merced Funeral Home at noon until two. In lieu of flowers donations can be made to the VA.



California regulators vote to outlaw new gas-powered lawn mowers, leaf blowers by 2024

By: Joseph Guzman, The Hill

Regulators in California have approved a measure to phase out the sale of new gas-powered lawn mowers and leaf blowers as part of an effort to move the state to a zero-emission future.

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) voted on Thursday to ban the sale of new off-road engines such as those found in leaf blowers, lawn mowers and other equipment by 2024. New portable generators will

be subject to stricter standards by that time and will be required to meet zero-emissions standards by 2028.

The decision by the board follows an executive order issued by California Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) to bar the sale of gas-powered lawn equipment to curb emissions.

According to CARB, gas-powered equipment produces more smog-forming emissions than light-duty passenger cars and is projected to produce almost twice as much as

passenger cars by 2031.

Using one backpack leaf blower for one hour generates the same smog-forming emissions as a car driving 1,100 miles, according to CARB. The new rule is estimated to cut smog-forming emissions by 72 tons per day, according to the board.

“Today’s action by the Board addresses these small but highly polluting engines. It is a significant step towards improving air quality in the state, and will definitely help

us meet stringent federal air quality standards,” CARB chair Liane Randolph said in a statement.

“It will also essentially eliminate exposure to harmful fumes for equipment operators and anyone nearby,” Randolph said.

The ban does not include existing gas-powered equipment, and the state has set aside \$30 million in incentive funds to help commercial landscapers and other businesses acquire zero-emission equipment.

AFBF: Ag labor must be exempt from travel restrictions

BY: AFBF

WASHINGTON — The American Farm Bureau Federation, along with more than 60 other agriculture groups, sent a letter today to the Biden administration requesting that agricultural workers be exempted from travel restrictions from South Africa. The “Proclamation on Suspension of Entry as Immigrants and Nonimmigrants of Certain Additional Persons Who Pose a Risk of Transmitting Coronavirus Disease 2019” prohibits travel for individuals from several countries, including South Africa, due to concerns over the omicron variant. The letter also requests flexibility in regard to the “Proclamation on Advancing the Safe

Resumption of Global Travel During the COVID-19 Pandemic,” which limits entry into the United States to only those fully vaccinated with a CDC-approved vaccine with limited exceptions.

The letter, addressed to Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas, requests that the agencies ensure access to these essential members of the agricultural workforce by giving National Interest Exceptions to H-2A workers coming to the United States as outlined in the proclamations as an exception to the travel restrictions. The letter states, “Instead of imposing travel bans that prevent critically needed H-2A workers from traveling to American

farms or lead to added transportation costs that do not achieve COVID mitigation goals, farmers, H-2A workers, the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department should work together to allow workers taking appropriate health and safety precautions to travel to the United States directly from their home countries.” Workers should be able to travel directly to the United States and can be vaccinated here with a CDC-approved vaccine.

Almost 7,000 guestworkers originate from South Africa, and the majority of them arrive in the U.S. in February, March and April. Many of these H-2A workers have a unique skillset, and American farmers are counting on their timely arrival as

they make plans for their upcoming growing seasons. The request for National Interest Exemptions is bolstered by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency designation of food and agricultural workers as essential during the pandemic.

“While protecting our nation from new variants of COVID-19 is critically important, it is in our national interest to ensure production of food, fuel and fiber,” the letter continues. “Considering the severe supply chain disruptions taking place, losing access to key employees who originate from these countries because of travel restrictions would further limit agriculture’s ability to grow safe and nutritious food.”

YF&R Update

**By: Alexis Rudich, YF&R Secretary/
Social Media Co-Chair**

In November we had a Thanksgiving Potluck at the MCFB office with our YF&R Members. We had a great meal and enjoyed playing Thanksgiving Family Feud. We decided to adopt a family for the holiday with Merced County Human Services Agency Season of Giving. We chose a family of seven to adopt!

We were able to give each member of the family a new outfit, shoes and some items they wanted for Christmas. We also donated 68lbs of non-perishable food items to the family for them to have during the holiday season.

This year Season of Giving celebrated their 20th year of giving. They are always looking to add new people or organizations to their list as their adoptable list of families is everchanging and growing. If you

are interested in being added to the Merced County Human Services Agency Season of Giving list, you can email them at seasonofgiving@countyofmerced.com.

Denelle Flake, Sarah Baskins and myself attended the 2021 California Young Farmers and Ranchers Conference in Garden Grove early in December. The conference was filled with awesome farm tours, workshops and Kiah Twisselman Burchett (Coach Kiah) was the keynote speaker. If you

are ever in Orange County, I highly recommend you check out Tanaka Farms and the Centennial Farm at the Orange County Fairgrounds. California YF&R raised a whopping \$87,100 for FarmPAC, the highest contribution they have had in a long time.

We are planning to reschedule our ice-skating meeting for January 11th from 6-8pm. We are looking forward to an exciting new year for our YF&R Chapter. We hope you have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



Merced YF&R members touring the Centennial Farm at the Orange County Fairgrounds.



Merced County YF&R members pictured with CA YF&R State Conference Keynote Speaker Kiah Twisselman Burchett



Merced County YF&R Season of Giving gifts

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Redistricting is drying up competitive congressional races

By: **Michael Macagnone, Roll Call**

Short-term advancements in data science combined with long-term shifts in how Americans vote are making swing districts increasingly rare.

State legislatures and political commissions control the redistricting process for the majority of the country. So far, 20 states have finished redrawing their congressional maps, which have produced only a handful of competitive House seats.

“It is almost a survival strategy for political parties within the states,” said Ken Kollman, a political science professor at the University of Michigan. “Competitive districts might be in someone’s interest — it might be in the interest of the public, it might be in the interest of our democracy, it might be in the interest of moderate policies moving forward — but it’s not in the interests of the specific state political parties.”

Political parties burned by recent wave elections — like Republicans in 2018 when Democrats took control of the House — may have gotten skittish about drawing risky seats. Kollman said a House map with many competitive seats would mean a party could win a few from the other side, or totally wipe out.

Months away from the first primary elections, it appears more House races will unfold in districts where one party holds a significant advantage. Although many campaigns to establish independent commissions have emphasized the need to create more competitive elections, it’s not always that easy.

Redistricting expert Kim Brace, who served as a consultant for Michigan’s redistricting commission, said that state’s process ran into problems when trying to satisfy competing priorities, such as complying with the Voting Rights Act — which can require drawing less competitive districts — and creating “compact” districts that split as few communities as possible. The state commission has several drafts and intends to approve a final plan later this month.

After going through that, competitiveness may fall to the wayside, Brace said; the commission’s three draft maps for Michigan have two or three competitive seats each, out of 13 total. Iowa, another commission state, produced a map under which the presidential margins in three of its four seats would have been less than 5 points.

Partisan advantage

As state legislatures continue to draw maps this cycle, the stakes are high for a closely divided House. The maps could end up determining control of the chamber, according to James Gimpel, a political science professor at the University of Maryland.

“Even if all of redistricting makes a 12- or 15-seat difference, it could be the size of your majority,” Gimpel said.

That means the parties that control the legislatures drawing the maps want to make sure they gain or keep as many seats as possible, said Michael Li, senior counsel for the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law.

Republicans, who made major gains in statehouses in a 2010 wave election that netted them 63 U.S. House seats, are now looking to maintain their advantages rather than go for new seats, Li said. GOP legislatures control redistricting in 19 states compared to eight for Democrats. The rest are either split or controlled by commissions.

“This decade people are doing gerrymanders, but they’re doing more ‘circling-the-wagons’ gerrymanders,” Li said.

Some states where Democrats control redistricting, such as Maryland, Illinois and Oregon, have produced maps with Democrat-leaning competitive seats. Such maps are targeting Republican incumbents, like Maryland’s Andy Harris, or forcing intraparty primaries. For example, after Illinois lost a seat following the 2020 census, Democratic mapmakers combined two Republican districts, essentially packing GOP voters into a single seat.

Li said Illinois and other states controlled by Democrats are aggressively drawing congressional maps, going after Republican-held

seats. However, the parsimony may have created a “booby trap” by drawing slightly Democratic districts that could swing red in a strong year for the GOP, Li said.

Those trends have also surfaced as political data has exploded in the past decade, according to Kollman. Political data firms have massive and growing voter files that include voting history, activity, language, ethnicity and religious affiliation.

“The data science revolution hitting American electoral politics has led to very careful engineering so they can pretty much know how we’re going to vote, pretty much at the level of neighborhood and ZIP code. You can be very precise, more than in the past,” Kollman said.

Long-term trends

Though people want more competitive House districts, it’s harder to draw them in ways that make sense.

Political homogeneity in many communities has grown over the past several decades. Individual geographical areas are more likely to vote for one party over another, as local communities grow increasingly homogeneous along income and education lines, according to a 2017 paper from researchers at MIT.

Gimpel said that means any underlying goals of redistricting — such as preserving communities of interest and making districts as compact as possible — will trend toward drawing a seat with constituents who vote similarly.

“If you are going to draw a boundary around a community of

interest, you are drawing a boundary around a district that is going to vote one way or another,” he said. “These folks often share values, including political values, and that is now part of what a community means.”

While cities have gotten more Democratic and rural areas more Republican, the suburbs of major cities, such as Atlanta, Chicago and Dallas, have gotten more competitive.

Even as places like suburban Chicago diversify, trying to draw competitive districts there runs up against other redistricting priorities, such as complying with the Voting Rights Act, Brace said. To maintain the percentage of Black voters in Illinois’ 1st and 2nd districts, the state’s new map included more of the Chicago suburbs than ever.

In some cases, mapmakers have targeted those areas. Li said Republicans redrew districts around Atlanta and Texas’ major cities to remove competition over suburban territory.

In Texas and Georgia, that would mean safer seats for both sides, but a net gain for Republicans, Li said. Both states currently face federal lawsuits alleging they violated the Voting Rights Act in drawing those lines.

“Republicans are betting that with a narrow Democratic majority in the House, if they can hang on to what they have and just rely on the dynamics of the year to pick up a few seats here and there ... that’s enough to give them a decent shot at a majority — potentially a majority for the whole of the decade,” Li said.



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Water rights, SGMA and Bay-Delta Plan propel lawsuits for 2022 and beyond

By: **Brad Hooker, AgriPulse**

Farm lobbyists are looking ahead to the next year as water battles escalate with the drought and groundwater sustainability plans.

In his keynote address for the California Farm Bureau's annual meeting last week, President Jamie Johansson set the tone for his policy outlook when he said an attack on water rights is coming.

"Priority rights are essential," said Johansson. "If those go away, we know what comes next. We'll all be begging at the feet of a bureaucracy to try to get our allotment."

During a session on water policy issues, Farm Bureau Senior Counsel Chris Scheuring elaborated on this forecast. He assured members that no "catastrophic water rights reform" is currently on the horizon and that farmers will not, in short order, lose the doctrine of prior appropriation that governs the current system.

"But we are looking at death by a thousand cuts," said Scheuring, describing a suite of emergency curtailment orders issued throughout the summer by the State Water Resources Control Board. "We are going to have to deal with continuous fights on new carve outs, like human health and safety."

While those needs do not fit within the priority rights system as it stands today, Scheuring acknowledged human health is "a tough thing to argue with when somebody can't turn on the kitchen sink to get a glass of water." He pledged to continue fighting for priority rights for every curtailment regulation going forward, but recognized the board should issue curtailments during drought years for the system to function as it was designed to.

Dennis Albani, vice president of California Advocates

"It's a system based on seniority, and in a dry year the juniors should not be diverting," he explained, reasoning that such illegal diversions would take away from senior right holders. "We have a very vested interest in seeing that this system works so that we won't get something else."

He described his role as ensuring the state water board implements the system properly, through due process and robust data. But curtailment orders

that impact pre-1914 and riparian rights "are not supposed to be on the books for the state water board," he argued.

Danny Merkley, who leads policy engagement on water resources for the farm bureau, described a different sort of threat to water rights that has not gained as much attention. After the passage of Senate Bill 88 in 2015 during the last drought, the state water board has required nearly all diverters to monitor and report on water use annually. Farmers have had to install new meters to be constantly connected to their diversion rates, he explained.

"By ignoring that, you are jeopardizing your water rights," said Merkley. "You're putting yourself at risk for very severe fines."

Despite the financial risk, the water board is not looking to be punitive and is more concerned about gathering the data to better inform curtailments, he cautioned. Without that real-time information, staff would have to lean on more conservative curtailments and estimate usage.

"The fastest way to give the water board what they want—more excuses to rearrange the deck with water rights and take your water rights away—is not to report," he said. "It is so important that everybody is doing that in a timely fashion, not only to protect your own water rights but also to protect our water rights system overall."

In tracking the data, board staff have found that most water right holders have not been reporting their diversions. Yet more than 90% of the total volume has been reported, due to larger water districts complying with the requirements. The law also exempts diversions of less than 10 acre-feet, offering regulatory relief for livestock ponds.

While the water board used that information to issue curtailments this year to ensure enough freshwater flows reach the Sacramento–San Joaquin Bay Delta, the battle over Delta pumping operations continues to play out in court.

In 2019 the Newsom administration sued federal agencies over Trump-era biological opinions for endangered fish species. This year the Biden administration sought to overturn the species review by once again initiating the consultation process, and in October the agencies submitted an interim operations plan for the Delta to

immediately replace the 2019 opinions, in coordination with Newsom's secretaries. That drew criticism from farm groups and California lawmakers, while conservation agencies claimed the interim plan did not go far enough.

"It makes nobody happy," said Scheuring, noting that the judge now has to decide how to move forward with the case without any agreement among parties. "The court might even fashion its own version of an interim operations plan for the Delta pumps."

The state water board is facing lawsuits, meanwhile, over the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan. Several Central Valley irrigation districts and the City of San Francisco claim the board has exceeded its authority in committing 40% of unimpaired flows to environmental protections in the Delta. The Newsom administration recently abandoned efforts to pursue voluntary agreements with south-of-Delta contractors, triggering the water board to revisit the Bay-Delta Plan and begin implementing the first phase, which was approved in a contentious 2018 decision.

During an informational hearing on the plan last week, Tom Berliner, an attorney representing the Merced Irrigation District (MID), which is the lead plaintiff in one case, excoriated the administration for pushing to commit 40% of unimpaired flows to environmental protections. According to Berliner, the court has held that the Bay-Delta Plan must be implemented through a water rights proceeding, and that discussion will not start for some time. Several environmental advocates encouraged the board to implement the plan next year through an emergency action. Berliner questioned the legality of that approach, since it would actually be updating 30 years' worth of regulations rather than responding to an emergency.

Merced Irrigation District General Manager John Sweigard had stronger words, describing the plan as a water grab by the board.

"They are coming for your water, and they are coming for it now. It is that simple," Sweigard warned his district in a statement. "It is incumbent on every resident in the community to help protect your water supply."

He worried the plan would send to the Delta as much as half of the water

supply from Lake McClure, which supplies farmers in eastern Merced County.

Along with Delta water flows, the courts will make key decisions over the coming decades on plans being submitted for the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). Some of those cases could take as long as 30 years to come to a final answer, according to Scheuring.

"The second part of any landmark regulatory scheme being enacted is the stuff that happens in the court system, and that takes a while," he explained, adding that the courts will decide how the government interprets language on issues like interconnected surface resources and groundwater depletions affecting wetlands.

Scheuring noted two lawsuits were filed against groundwater sustainability plans in the San Joaquin Valley before the Department of Water Resources even had a chance to review them, which raised skepticism over the viability of the cases, given that it may have been "too early to sue." Lawsuits over plans for the Indian Wells Valley and Cuyama groundwater basin along with the Madera Subbasin have moved forward as well.

Scheuring expected to see a legal battle over preemption for the Paso Robles Basin, where the county passed its own ordinances to restrict groundwater extraction before SGMA took effect.

"SGMA is the name of the game with that stuff," he said. "That [ordinance] is ripe for adjudication eventually, too."

Dennis Albani, the vice president of California Advocates and a policy representative for the Almond Alliance, told Agri-Pulse at the Almond Conference last week that he does not see any movement in the Legislature on reallocating water rights outright.

But he worried the water board may seek a permanent allocation for disadvantaged communities to shore up drinking water supplies, which he described as subtly rewriting water rights. Regions with unreliable drinking water have remained mostly undeveloped because they lack both surface and groundwater water supplies, he argued, adding as a counterweight: "People have built farms over generations because they have secure water."

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If you are a member of the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition and need assistance completing your 2021 INMP reports, please contact the MCFB office at (209) 723-3001 to schedule an appointment.

Thank you!

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Danette Toso

each year, we prepare for the worst, and hope and pray for the best. Sadly, there has been way too much “worst” in Mariposa County the last few years.

In the wake of the ongoing drought we’ve been enduring, there have been far too many ranchers being forced to sell their livestock at discounted prices. We’ve been pushed to feed hay this year far too early, and the costs are skyrocketing. Family ranches that have been in business for generations have been tragically forced out of business, it’s heartbreaking.

We are always thankful for any moisture that is bestowed upon our land but, so far, not so good. The total rainfall for the current season in Mariposa County as of 12/7/21 was a pitiful 3.7500. These totals are from Cotton Creek Ranch’s “Keeper of the Rain,” Dick Wilkey. My dad has been diligently measuring and recording the rainfall at our ranch for the last 30 years. Dad is my go-to person for our county weather reports for the FSA county committee meetings I attend.

One of the main topics of conversation in my realm, is weather, (ok, weather and politics.) We all have several weather apps on our phones and we frequently check with

our friends and neighbors with the hope that ours, might happen to be wrong and rain is in the immediate forecast. Well, thank the Lord, the forecast was correct all the way around. The melodious rhythm of rain on the roof last night was music to my ears and I gratefully slept more soundly than I have in ages. The feeling of relief, (as temporary as it might be) was enormous, and we are tremendously thankful for every rain drop. How wonderful would it be if the flood gates have been opened and

this disastrous drought will soon be nothing more than dust in the wind?!

As the year comes to a close, we reflect on the lessons we’ve learned, and are grateful for the many blessings we’ve received. I wish you a very Merry Christmas, and as always, I encourage farmers, ranchers, and conservators to invite friends, neighbors, and family members to join the collective voice of the Farm Bureau. Together, we can make our organization stronger than ever, one member at a time.

As fellow farmers and ranchers, we understand that this industry is not for the faint of heart. With the myriad of obstacles we constantly contend with, the weather is undeniably the most challenging. As we anxiously await the rainfall season



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Our very heartfelt thanks go out to the life-saving legends who donated blood!

We received 31 pints from our donors.

These 31 pints will impact 93 lives for the better!

Keep an eye out as we plan to host another blood drive in the future.

Save the Date

**MCFB
104TH
ANNUAL
MEETING**

March 25, 2022

Tickets purchased and held from
our 2020 event will be honored
More details to come