

PUBLIC MEETING
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DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 PRESIDENT MONTNA: My name is Alfredo Montna.
3 I'm from Yuba City, California, and I am President of the
4 State Board of Food and Agriculture. With us tonight are
5 our Members of our State Board, and I'd like them to
6 introduce themselves, starting on my left, Mr. Meyers.

7 BOARD MEMBER MEYERS: Buenos tardes. I'm Marvin
8 Meyers. I am a farmer in the San Joaquin Valley and I
9 grow almonds with a family farm and I grow a lot of
10 almonds and frijoles, and I've been a member of the State
11 Board for many years.

12 BOARD MEMBER DEARDORFF: Buenos tardes. I'm Tom
13 Deardorff with Deardorff Family Farms based here in
14 Oxnard. We grow row crops, strawberries, celery,
15 tomatoes. And I've been on the Board for about a year and
16 a half.

17 And I just want to say thank you for all you guys
18 showing up. This is a long process that we've been going
19 through up and down the state, and getting your input is
20 very important. I'm glad that, you know, Ventura County
21 is well represented and I'm glad that you all decided to
22 show up here tonight. We look forward to hearing from
23 you. Thank you.

24 BOARD MEMBER HALLSTROM: Buenos Tardes. (In
25 Spanish with no translation.)

1 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EDDY: Hello. I'm Josh Eddy,
2 the Executive Director of the State Board of Food and
3 Agriculture.

4 PRESIDENT MONTNA: Again, Al Montna, rice farmer,
5 Yuba City, California.

6 This is Secretary Kawamura. He'll be speaking in
7 a moment.

8 BOARD MEMBER ROSS: Thank you for being here. My
9 name is Karen Ross, and I'm with the California
10 Association of Wine Grape Growers.

11 BOARD MEMBER BACCHETTI-SILVA: Ann Silva. I have
12 a dairy farm in Tracy, and it's a family farm. And I'm a
13 third-generation dairy farmer. And this is my fourth year
14 on the State Board of Food and Agriculture.

15 BOARD MEMBER BRANSFORD: Welcome. I'm Don
16 Bransford. I'm a farmer from the Sacramento valley. I
17 grow rice, almonds and prunes.

18 BOARD MEMBER WEHNER: I'm Dave Wehner. I'm Dean
19 of the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental
20 Sciences at Cal Poly University in San Luis Obispo.

21 PRESIDENT MONTNA: Mr. Secretary.

22 (Secretary Kawamura conducts this session in
23 Spanish. English transcription is through the
24 interpreter.)

25 SECRETARY KAWAMURA: Welcome. Thank you very

1 much. Good afternoon. My name is Arturo Kawamura. I am
2 a producer in Orange County. And we're still in Orange
3 County, aside from the tons of asphalt between the
4 buildings, but there is still agriculture there. But a
5 large part of the reason we are here is because if there
6 is no plan for agriculture in California, the future is
7 more development of agricultural land for more homes,
8 buildings, apartments, no agriculture. So we need an
9 idea, we need a vision of where we want to go.

10 So we're here to try to hear from you, from all
11 the people in California who are part of agriculture. And
12 the truth is, all citizens, everybody who lives here, all
13 the population of California has to support agriculture.
14 Why? Because we all eat.

15 And we're here to listen; we want to hear and
16 look forward, look ahead to the year 2030. Where are we
17 going? Where do we want to arrive? And if we don't want
18 to -- if we don't have a significant vision in our heads
19 of where we want to go, who knows where we'll wind up
20 being. It is possible we may lose a great deal of our
21 ability here in California to continue part of this
22 agriculture. We know about the competition worldwide, we
23 know it's huge. And there are many regions in the world
24 that can produce the same things we produce here.

25 So a very important thing is what is the value,

1 what is the value of agriculture? The value has to be
2 more than just food; it's the people, it's all the
3 communities, the families who are working in and around
4 agriculture. And we're all part of the agriculture
5 family.

6 So today we're going to hear just as we have in
7 previous weeks. We were in Redding and Sacramento,
8 Tulare, near Fresno, tomorrow we're going to San Diego,
9 and San Luis Obispo last week, and we're trying to cover
10 the entire state and hear from all of you. So it's
11 somewhat late, it's almost evening, and we want to hear,
12 and I don't want to speak much, but we're here to listen.

13 So thank you very, very much for being here, and
14 those of you who are going to give your testimonials,
15 welcome. And we're going to remember and record these
16 testimonials that are part of the library of our plan to
17 put together something that is current for the agriculture
18 in California.

19 Governor Schwarzenegger is very supportive of
20 agriculture. It's important to remember when he was a
21 child, every day he was milking cows when he was a child,
22 so he has the ability to support and appreciate
23 agriculture different from most of the leaders in the
24 United States.

25 And with that, thank you. And I'm very anxious

1 to hear from you, everything you have within you.

2 PRESIDENT MONTNA: Mr. Secretary, thank you.

3 Again, welcome, and thank you for spending your

4 evening with the State Board of Food and Agriculture.

5 We're very anxious to hear your testimony in regards to

6 the ag vision for California through 2030.

7 And with that --

8 SECRETARY KAWAMURA: Can I say one more thing?

9 PRESIDENT MONTNA: Sure, of course.

10 SECRETARY KAWAMURA: One more thing. I want to

11 present Jesus Torres from the 35th District Assembly.

12 Thank you for being here. And, please, my

13 greetings to Assemblyman Nava. And we heard very clearly

14 that we need to have a meeting in the afternoons after

15 working hours, so thank you to him.

16 PRESIDENT MONTNA: Okay. So thank you very much

17 again.

18 And with that, I'd like to introduce Carolyn

19 Penny, who is our facilitator for this evening.

20 Carolyn, please.

21 FACILITATOR PENNY: Buenos tardes. My name is

22 Carolyn Penny, and my job tonight is to help the meeting

23 run smoothly. Your jobs will be to speak to the Board and

24 to listen to each other. The job of the Board is to

25 listen to you.

1 Here's how this is going to work: First, you
2 need to know that the session tonight and all of the
3 sessions are made possible in part by grants from the
4 Clarence E. Heller Charitable Foundation and the Columbia
5 Foundation. The session's going to be videotaped and
6 transcribed, so please speak slowly and clearly for the
7 record. Your comments will be put up on the website for
8 CDFA, and the tape will be made available too.

9 Each person will have up to five minutes to
10 speak. If you use less than five minutes, that's okay. I
11 will have a timekeeper at the table with me. The
12 timekeeper will hold up a sign when you have one minute
13 left and then when you have no time left. If you get to
14 the time card, please go ahead and wrap up your comments
15 so we can hear from the next speaker.

16 My job is to keep us on track and on time. So I
17 may intervene to keep us on track and on time. I may also
18 intervene with the Board to keep us on track and on time.
19 The Board Members may ask you a question after you speak
20 to clarify what it is you said, so don't be surprised if
21 that happens. We ask you to turn cell phones and pagers
22 off or to vibrate for the course of this session. Now is
23 a good time if you did not already think of that.

24 When you speak, the Board asks you to respond to
25 four questions: What is your vision for California

1 agriculture by 2030? What will be the biggest challenge
2 in achieving that vision? In 2030 how has the public
3 perception of agriculture changed? And what is a
4 must-have in an ag vision for California? You choose
5 which of those points is most important to you, or you can
6 cover them all in the five minutes.

7 If your points were made by another speaker, you
8 can pass when we get to your turn. I will call out the
9 speaker's number and name so that you always know where
10 you are in the order. I think that's most of it, other
11 than you can give your comments in writing tonight or at
12 the website. The email you can send it to is
13 agvision@cdfa.ca.gov.

14 Can everyone live with this as a way to run
15 tonight's meeting?

16 Now, I'm going to ask the Board. They've heard
17 me ask them before.

18 So with that, we are -- our interpreters are
19 Gabriela Husson and J.D. Mendez. They're waving over
20 there in the corner.

21 Was there any other housekeeping, Gabriela or
22 J.D.? No? Then we're good to go.

23 So start with speaker 1 up to the microphone,
24 please, Gloria Roman. After that will be Caesar
25 Hernandez.

1 MS. ROMAN: Good evening, Honorable Secretary
2 Kawamura and Members of the Board for Food and
3 Agriculture. I just want to thank you very much for
4 making this available to some of us that work late, and I
5 really appreciate the time you have taken to hear us.

6 My name is Gloria Roman, and I serve as Vice
7 President of the Board of CAUSE, which is Central Coast
8 Alliance United for Sustainable Economy. And CAUSE's
9 mission is to build grassroots power for social, economic
10 and environmental justice in Ventura and Santa Barbara
11 counties. We do this through policy research, leadership
12 development, community organization and efficacy.

13 CAUSE's vision for California's agriculture by
14 the year 2030 is a sustainable agriculture that
15 prioritizes protection for and a better quality of life
16 for farm workers. Farm workers protection and better
17 quality of life includes the follows six things that we
18 talk: First, it's a living wage. In Oxnard we have a
19 living wage policy, not an ordinance. We're working to
20 get it into an ordinance.

21 Number two is the legal status. Families are
22 being separated and live in constant fear because of their
23 documentation status. And farm workers who are working,
24 they're working and contributing to the agriculture
25 community and they need legal documentation. Even us that

1 are documented are in fear, or live in fear. Universal
2 health care is number three. 70 percent of the farm
3 workers are uninsured. Farm workers need health
4 insurance. Number four is affordable housing.

5 Number five, workers' health and safety. Farm
6 workers still need basic access to water, restrooms, and
7 protection from heat stroke. We can't accept any more
8 deaths like that of the 17-year-old young woman who was
9 pregnant and died from working in a hundred degree weather
10 without protection, inadequate breaks and water.

11 Number six is healthy agriculture communities.
12 This includes community supported agriculture, healthy
13 food access in low-income communities as well as
14 affordable child care, preschool and after-school programs
15 for farm workers' children, affordable and dependable
16 transportation.

17 My experience, growing up with my family who are
18 farm workers, and now I manage a mobile home park where
19 most of the family that is who I live with or work in the
20 agriculture industry. And it shows still, it shows that
21 we still have a very long way to go for farm workers to
22 live in dignity with a quality of life that is better than
23 just survival.

24 I just wanted to share with you a little bit
25 about my experience when I was growing up. I stayed home

1 and I was a caretaker for my parents, for my siblings,
2 five of them, and I had to make sure that they go to
3 school. But I didn't see my parents. They went to work
4 at dawn. I didn't see them. I send my brothers and
5 sister to school, came back from school, and I didn't see
6 my parents until dusk. Sometimes we were all asleep by
7 the time they got home.

8 And it's a lonely feeling. I still -- I still --
9 every time I mention it, I just -- my heart is still a
10 lonely feeling. Loneliness is awful, especially when you
11 have -- it's an awful thing. And I just want to leave it
12 at that. And I see this where I work, those children
13 where I work, they're out there most of the time alone
14 also waiting for the parents. It's a lonely feeling.

15 So CAUSE has a history of working with diverse
16 people and organizations so that more people, not just a
17 few, can benefit from a strong economy. We have worked
18 with coalitions including the business community to pass
19 four living wages, four living wages in Ventura County.
20 We have worked with community faith, labor and health
21 providers to improve health care access to uninsured
22 children. CAUSE is part of a statewide Poder Popular
23 Project that works with farm workers in the community so
24 that they can have a stronger voice and be included in
25 important public decisions, like here today. And thank

1 you so much.

2 CAUSE is also cooperating with Ventura
3 Agriculture Future Alliance and Roots for Change, Roots of
4 Change fund. CAUSE looks forward to working with the
5 California Department of Food and Agriculture for a
6 sustainable agriculture that shows concerns for farm
7 workers through a living wage, health, safety, health care
8 and housing, (unintelligible) and a healthy community.

9 Just to close, please allow me to invite you to
10 visit, eatlocaloneyear.com. And I'm part of this group.
11 It's called locavore. It's a person who pays attention to
12 where his and her food comes from and commits to eating
13 local food as much as possible. We started this for the
14 next year. And part of that group I've committed already,
15 and so we're going to be checking where food comes from
16 and commit to eat locally, buy locally to support our
17 farmers here in California and especially our Oxnard
18 farmers.

19 So I really -- we have -- Sunday was about 30
20 members that signed up, and we're looking for 100 to join.
21 Then throughout Ventura County, we are looking for 10,000
22 to join, and we're also looking for 100,000 non-core
23 participants, the State of California, and one million in
24 the United States to join our support here for the
25 eatlocaloneyear.com.

1 And I thank you very much.

2 PRESIDENT MONTNA: Thank you, Gloria.

3 SECRETARY KAWAMURA: Thank you.

4 PRESIDENT MONTNA: Gracias.

5 FACILITATOR PENNY: All right. Next up, speaker
6 2, Caesar Hernandez. Next will be Salvador Rivera.

7 MR. HERNANDEZ: Good evening, Secretary Kawamura
8 and Members of the Board. My name is Caesar Hernandez.
9 I'm the Director of Community Organizing for CAUSE, who
10 you just heard from Gloria. And I'm also the Project
11 Manager for the Poder Popular Ventura County Project,
12 which is part of a statewide effort in ten agricultural
13 communities across California that's been funded by the
14 California Endowment. And as you know, the California
15 Endowment has invested significant resources into
16 agricultural communities; and what you see tonight is a
17 result of some of that work, the fact that farm workers
18 are actively engaged and participating in the
19 decision-making processes that impact their families'
20 lives and their communities. And it's in that spirit that
21 I'd like to publicly thank the Secretary and this Board
22 for offering this evening's session that allows for
23 greater participation in the process.

24 The Secretary took one of my lines that I had
25 included in my comments, but it is true, if you don't know

1 where we're going, any road will take us there. And the
2 fact that we are in this process of beginning to create a
3 vision and to begin to open our imaginations and plant the
4 seeds that will grow to become this collective vision for
5 California agriculture in 2030 is very important.

6 What is our vision as collective of Poder
7 Popular, who is working to empower, engage, mobilize farm
8 workers and their families in the places where they live,
9 to improve their social and living conditions, is that our
10 vision is a simple vision that's going to have a lot of
11 details that need to be, you know, included. But
12 basically it's in California in the year 2030, we want to
13 see an agriculture industry where we have three key
14 components as primary to that vision, and that's economic
15 prosperity, environmental health and social equity, the
16 three Es.

17 Economic prosperity, just as important, it's just
18 as important to farm workers as it is to the producers and
19 the growers. We cannot talk about better wages and
20 benefits without economic prosperity, so it's just as
21 important to us for that to happen.

22 Environmental health, to have healthier
23 agricultural practices that continue the important
24 stewardship role that the industry knows and feels is so
25 vital to its own identity.

1 And social equity, a state where we will commit
2 to working for full inclusion of farm laborers, their
3 families and the communities where they live and work to
4 transform our local regions into healthy, thriving ag
5 communities.

6 You know, Frederick Douglass said, there's no
7 progress without struggle. So this isn't going to be an
8 easy process, and there are many challenges that are going
9 to face us in this endeavor.

10 One of the greatest challenges in achieving this
11 collective for California agriculture is the lack of
12 comprehensive immigration reform that will continue to --
13 that will provide for a continuous legal status for all
14 workers. The legal status of workers impacts every aspect
15 of their lives and their family members' lives. And
16 although there has been great unified work from worker
17 advocates and growers in pursuing federal immigration
18 reform, there is still a lot more collaborative work that
19 needs to be done. We need to effectively engage other
20 members of the food system's chain, retailers, lenders
21 need to engage. We need to engage in that federal debate
22 for immigration reform. And once we achieve meaningful
23 humane immigration reform, we have to work together to
24 retain the workforce instead of constantly having to
25 import more workers.

1 There will be many challenges in addition to
2 immigration reform that we will face. The question is can
3 we create a vision that is big enough to match the
4 magnitude of the challenges we face and innovative enough
5 to turn those challenges into opportunities. That vision
6 would incorporate fundamental American values of equality,
7 dignity and justice. And that kind of a vision has to
8 also be compelling enough to inspire people throughout
9 California to work towards its implementation.

10 I attended this afternoon session's during my
11 lunch break, and as I listened to many of the comments in
12 the session this afternoon, I was pleased to realize how
13 much more we have in common than we actually think. Farm
14 workers also want economic prosperity, secure and legal
15 work status, decent housing opportunities, to be healthy
16 and to live in healthy communities. With the California
17 ag vision whose goals include economic prosperity,
18 environmental health and social equity, the public
19 perception of ag will be that ag is sustainable and we are
20 worth supporting, because it's not only profitable for
21 farmers but it's also healthy and improves the lives of
22 farm workers, their families, and the communities in which
23 agriculture thrives.

24 A must-have in this vision for California is the
25 meaningful participation of the hundreds of thousands of

1 farm workers that are part of this industry. Tonight is
2 an example of that desire to participate. CDFA needs to
3 broaden their constituency to include farm workers, and
4 there are various steps that the Department can take to
5 ensure this representation, including the possibility or
6 the vision of designating a seat on the CDFA Board for an
7 agricultural worker or an organization that represents ag
8 workers reviewing all existing programs to ensure that the
9 three Es are at the forefront of their work.

10 And an important first step in farm worker
11 participation is again, tonight's session. Through this
12 action CDFA is providing an important step in allowing the
13 farm worker experience and interest to meaningfully
14 influence decisions, from the development through
15 implementation.

16 I appreciate the time that we have and the
17 opportunity to participate, and hopefully we can continue
18 to participate in this process.

19 PRESIDENT MONTNA: Caesar, just one minute. Just
20 for your information, the State Board has been very active
21 in ag jobs and fair and progressive immigration policy for
22 guest workers and legal status for many of our very, very
23 important workers in this industry.

24 Board Member Luawanna Hallstrom is our expert,
25 resident expert on ag jobs and that future. You may want

1 to spend a little time with her after. But we're very
2 supportive of that.

3 MR. HERNANDEZ: Absolutely, and we are too. I
4 think the one thing we just must recognize is that in our
5 labor force it's not just individual workers and single
6 men who are here, it's families as you can see. And so
7 when we talk about immigration reform, we cannot ignore
8 the families and those that are also part of this network
9 that we are talking about.

10 PRESIDENT MONTANA: Families are the future.

11 And the other thing, the Board's made up of 15
12 members chosen by the Governor to this Board. An
13 application can be filled out online, and we can certainly
14 communicate with you on how to do that or where to go to
15 do that, and all applicants are welcome. We don't pick
16 anybody for the Board, that's the Governor's job, but
17 that's where you start.

18 MR. HERNANDEZ: Absolutely. And we hope that the
19 Secretary will take this message to the Governor. And,
20 you know, through Poder Popular and the efforts of the
21 California Endowment, you know, there are leaders being
22 trained across the State of California, and we hope that
23 some day those leaders will have the capacity and the
24 ability to sit on a Board and be a part of the discussions
25 that are so important that take place.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think I see him running
2 for office.

3 PRESIDENT MONTNA: You should get the application
4 filled out. Thank you.

5 FACILITATOR PENNY: Speaker 3, Salvador Rivera.
6 And then it will be speaker 4, Maria Zagal.

7 MR. RIVERA: To each and every one of this
8 important Board, my name is Salvador Rivera. I am just a
9 farm worker, ag worker, and I would like to comment in
10 regards to, well, it's actually two points for discussion,
11 and they follow: Agriculture in California, we know that
12 as California is pushed forward, gets momentum from
13 hard-working men and women, but our everyday impulse for
14 us to work daily has been diminished, or we haven't been
15 too motivated, to put it another way, because of the
16 people that I will -- that -- the people that are
17 governing us. Because first of all, they have not -- and
18 as you mentioned, it's been worked on, but this is my
19 opinion, they have not really placed a lot of importance
20 on priorities that are very important for us, such as the
21 ones that I'll state in a minute.

22 One, when we need to get from one job to the
23 other or from south to northern California to continue,
24 follow the crops, we do it very afraid, very insecure,
25 because we do not have a driver's license. I'll be brief.

1 The next point would be also when we travel to
2 see our family members, our children, to our country of
3 origin, to come back, because we have to come back, work
4 calls us wherever there's work, we have the hands to work
5 it, we need to walk several days crossing the desert.
6 I've lived this several times, even putting our own lives
7 at risk. That just because we don't have a work permit.

8 As of lately, I've seen a lot of my friends or
9 just people I know to -- that they're moving to different
10 states. And what's going to happen if more farm workers,
11 laborers continue thinking this way? The vision for the
12 future for agriculture in California, it is my opinion
13 that perhaps in a couple of decades, California would have
14 little or no workers.

15 Thank you for your attention. And I'm afraid of
16 going over five minutes, so I'll leave it at that. Thank
17 you.

18 FACILITATOR PENNY: Speaker 4, Maria Zagal. Then
19 speaker 5, Graciela Selvia.

20 MS. ZAGAL: Buenos tardes. My name is Maria
21 Zagal. I represent the group Poder Popular of Santa
22 Paula. My husband works in the field. The future of
23 agriculture is important for our family because for
24 economic health. Our economic health depends on
25 agriculture, just as many other families in our state.

1 Another point I would like to mention is that for
2 the year 2030, agriculture to be healthier for workers
3 with less pesticides or pesticides that don't harm us as
4 much and more organic ag production or healthier ag
5 production.

6 And as they are the ones who are doing the actual
7 work, the opinion not only of Santa Barbara and Oxnard,
8 but of other workers, such as the gentleman who just
9 spoke, is very important because we depend on them to
10 bring our food to our homes and our income, and the other
11 plan or project, no matter how good, would be better to
12 carry it through to achieve something. We are working for
13 something; we want to achieve our results he just
14 mentioned. Driver's license does something for that. To
15 work for a little, to work on the immigration reform and
16 things like that. If we work together, it can be done.

17 That is all. Thank you.

18 FACILITATOR PENNY: Speaker 5, Graciela Selvia.
19 Then speaker 6, Jesus Torres.

20 MS. SELVIA: Good afternoon to everybody. My
21 name is Graciela Selvia. I humbly represent Poder
22 Popular. Thank God and you who give me the opportunity to
23 be able to express what could happen with our planet and
24 the agriculture and the future. This could be the first
25 example.

1 I am 61 years old, I was in fourth grade when I
2 was eight or nine years old when my teacher named Martha
3 was giving us this lesson. She compared the earth,
4 planet, with an orange, and I brought you a lemon, that
5 has a orange-colored peel and covers a part that looks
6 like a peel. And then that peel covers a white spongy
7 material. And then there's a skin that looks like an
8 onion skin. And even so, the juice is covered by some
9 particles.

10 This orange is like our planet. It's very well
11 protected; however, if we inject a syringe into the
12 orange, we take out all the juice in it, the orange will
13 wither and dry up. Man, by removing this liquid called
14 gasoline, within 100 years we will begin to see the
15 consequences of wars between nations and hunger because
16 the earth is going to have to help man because the fruit
17 will be the preoccupation of man and they won't know how
18 to repair a wound that man causes to heaven trying to
19 leave his footprints on the moon, and then the judgment
20 years will begin. Among this we can talk about the lunar
21 comet called Apollo 11. As I said, at that time I was
22 nine years old; this was in 1969.

23 All my children shall be pursued and they shall
24 be killed because of me, said God. Those who take care of
25 my creation, those who keep quiet, those who cry without

1 finding counsel and men, I shall be there, said God. And
2 you must have faith when my body all comes together. In
3 other words, all the countries of all classes of all
4 colors, and if we will work together as a team, we can
5 resolve this huge problem.

6 When my body comes together, that shall be the
7 solution, and that means immigration. You have the
8 solution to the problem of migratory loss because this is
9 the only way that we will give the farm worker the
10 security to be able to work without nervousness, and he
11 will be more productive in an environment that is free of
12 blackmail and corruption. There will be no more deaths.
13 Because I have suffered through that as well when I
14 crossed. I suffered a great deal. I thank the
15 United States because I have found work. My country's
16 Guatemala, however my country is very green.

17 Now, my vision is when you do build the housing,
18 I would like you to add in that project a home for
19 children; not a daycare center, an actual home for
20 children where young ladies who don't want to study, well,
21 they can be taught a craft as emergency nurses or as child
22 care, because this will create jobs for nurses and cooks,
23 because feeding these children, by feeding these children
24 the vegetables that we have forgotten about, because they
25 will be well-known cooks, because in this way the parents

1 will be able to leave their children there and go to work
2 without any kind of problem. And then they will pick up
3 their children. And we know that the parents will be
4 happy to pay what they pay people who are outside, will
5 pay that institution, the doctor, for any kind of quick
6 emergency. I can say this because we are all children of
7 God and we're all the same.

8 So if this generation, to save this generation,
9 we have to begin from zero. To begin we must first
10 respect God and then respect our elders, because we have
11 forgotten about being kind, education, respect of our
12 elders; there is none of that. And to let children --
13 parents to take these children at least one day, take them
14 out to the field to work so that they know what we're
15 doing working under sun. I say this with humility. I
16 don't have big words to be able to express myself that
17 way, but I would like to do that for our future.

18 Thank you.

19 FACILITATOR PENNY: Speaker 6, Jesus Torres. And
20 then it will be speaker 7, Erica Fernandez.

21 MR. TORRES: Mr. Secretary, distinguished Members
22 of the Board, the hard-working residents of Oxnard, I'm
23 Jesus Torres. I'm here on behalf of State Assemblymember
24 Pedro Nava. And my father was actually a farm worker, so
25 you're actually looking at division of agriculture in

1 Ventura County and beyond.

2 I'm here on behalf of the Assemblymember to read
3 a brief letter, and I promise it's brief. There's a long
4 list of speakers that have probably more valuable things
5 to say.

6 Just let me go on to say, Dear Secretary
7 Kawamura, welcome to the 35th Assembly District. I would
8 like to extend my thanks for being flexible in considering
9 my request for an evening session to include those who
10 cannot previously participate due to work schedules.
11 Unfortunately, my own work schedule cannot be
12 accommodated, as I am in Sacramento working on behalf of
13 my constituents.

14 The 35th District is rich in agriculture and
15 tradition. The grape vineyards and wine making in the
16 Santa Ynez valley, the flower orchards in Carpinteria and
17 the strawberry fields of Oxnard all make for a perfect and
18 romantic combination, wines, strawberries and flowers.
19 But not all is perfect or romantic in my district or in
20 California when it comes to agriculture.

21 We face daunting global competition, increased
22 development over prime farmland, and an uncertain water
23 future, critical labor shortage, drastic weather, food
24 being an issue of national security, and a lack of housing
25 and health care for our farm workers, just to name a few.

1 But Ventura County's very resilient and it has a
2 committed community and it has come together to address
3 some of these challenges. For instance, the Ag Futures
4 Alliance of Ventura County along with the Ventura County
5 Farm Worker Task Force has looked for solutions to the
6 housing crisis. The Cabrillo Economic Development
7 Corporation has been a leader in building farm worker
8 housing developments here in Ventura County.

9 The Ventura Unified School District has
10 instituted a Farm To School program to provide our
11 students local, farm-fresh produce for healthy eating
12 while giving our growers another market. Stakeholder
13 groups such as CAUSE, which has been a leader in
14 advocating for our farm workers in our community, they
15 have been formed to address these issues of health care
16 and other quality of life issues for our farm workers.

17 I established a farm worker program in California
18 to safely transport farm workers to and from work and
19 authored legislation to help facilitate farm worker
20 housing and introduced a bill to expand the Farm To School
21 program statewide.

22 A community committed to the future of
23 agriculture in working together to find solutions to
24 conflict, challenges is my vision for the future of
25 California agriculture.

1 Thank you for considering my comments, and again,
2 welcome. Thank you, Pedro Nava.

3 FACILITATOR PENNY: Speaker 7, Erica Fernandez.
4 And then will be speaker 8, Adreis Garcia.

5 MS. FERNANDEZ: Good evening. My name is Erica
6 Fernandez, and I'm 17 years old, and today I would like to
7 share my story. As a child of farm workers, I have seen
8 how my parents have worked in those fields, and yet their
9 lives have not improved. How can one explain the
10 hardships of a farm worker that can barely sustain their
11 families and their homes? Well, I'm the example of one of
12 those kids.

13 I have seen how my parents would wake up early
14 before the sun even came up and will arrive home when the
15 sun was gone. There were times when I was not able to see
16 them. They were hardly involved in my school activities
17 because they knew that if they miss work, less income was
18 coming into the household and more tension to them.

19 After over 30 years working in the fields, my
20 father was declared disabled with respiratory problems.
21 He now has to use an oxygen tank at home and carry an
22 inhaler around because one of his lungs is shut down. Is
23 this the result of pesticides? You tell me.

24 Seeing all my family working in the fields is not
25 something to be embarrassed, yet what really makes me

1 worry is the idea that they kill themselves for nothing.
2 They do not have affordable housing, they do not have a
3 decent living wage nor possess health insurance when they
4 get hurt. In addition, they can't afford to buy healthy
5 food for their children.

6 And let's not forget about the legal status. How
7 many of our parents migrated to the United States with the
8 idea of having a better life for them and their children?
9 How is it possible that these people are willing to
10 sacrifice their lives working around pesticides and get
11 treated as criminals when everything they do is to help
12 the economy. Who's going to work the fields in the years
13 to come? Who's going to harvest the crops that daily we
14 consume? Who but us? Are we willing to improve our farm
15 workers' lives or are we going to end with the
16 opportunities of other people?

17 Two years ago my parents were forced to move away
18 from Oxnard because rent became very expensive. My mother
19 is 52 years old and she's currently working picking
20 oranges. She goes to work at 5:00 in the morning and
21 comes late at night. At her age, she cannot be doing that
22 type of job, where the planes spray the pesticides over
23 their heads. Many have died as a result of pesticides.

24 Today I come forward to share my story. I don't
25 see this country being prosperous without agriculture and

1 farm workers, yet I see it taking the lead on improving
2 their lives and reducing the amount of pesticides used. I
3 hope that in the years to come my people will still have
4 their jobs and also enjoy of a healthy and safe
5 environment.

6 Before I finish, I would like to share with you
7 some words of my role model, Caesar Chavez, a farm worker
8 who helps improve the lives of many and his legacy
9 continues today. Once social change begins, it cannot be
10 reversed. You cannot uneducate the person who has learned
11 to read, you cannot humiliate the person who feels pride,
12 and you cannot oppress the people who are not afraid
13 anymore. We are the future, and the future is ours.

14 Today I ask you to think about the past, the
15 present and the future generations to come. Thank you
16 once again.

17 PRESIDENT MONTANA: Thank you, Erica.

18 FACILITATOR PENNY: Speaker 8, Adreis Garcia.
19 And then speaker 9, Eileen McCarthy.

20 MR. GARCIA: Tough act to follow. Good evening,
21 Secretary Kawamura, Mr. President, and Members of the
22 Board. My name is Andreis Garcia. I'm a staff attorney
23 with the Migrant Unit for California Rural Legal
24 Assistance here in Oxnard. I'm here speaking tonight on
25 behalf of our lower-income clients. And that being said,

1 I'd like to thank the Board for opening up this dialog so
2 that we can hear such impassioned pleas like the one we
3 just heard from Miss Fernandez and others as well.

4 Our statewide vision for California ag by 2030 is
5 an agricultural industry where all contributors, growers
6 the environment, and especially farm workers, are valid
7 and treated with respect and dignity. That being said,
8 today my comments will focus primarily on farm workers and
9 their rights.

10 Just as agriculture is not viable without growers
11 and natural resources, agriculture is not viable without
12 farm workers. I'd like to focus on two specific issues
13 that our office comes into contact with. Number one,
14 labor and employment violations. We would like to see
15 continued and increased vigilance regarding the
16 enforcement of labor and employment laws and regulations.
17 While there has been some improvement in this area over
18 the years, we still have a long ways to go.

19 Our office continually sees violations of the
20 labor code and wage orders, including and especially the
21 failure to provide overtime and meal and rest periods.
22 Our hope is that over time the industry will continue to
23 improve in this area so that farm workers receive all of
24 the pay that they are entitled to under the law.

25 The second issue that I'd like to address is

1 worker health and safety. Our office would like to see
2 increased and continued enforcement of existing health and
3 safety laws and regulations. Unfortunately we still see
4 individuals who have been exposed to and have become sick
5 from exposure to pesticides. We also continually see
6 individuals that have not been adequately trained on the
7 dangers of pesticides, training that is especially
8 important since farm workers can transport these very
9 dangerous chemicals home to their children and families.

10 Also with the recent death of the young lady up
11 north, we would like to see continued and increased
12 employer vigilance with regards to providing of rest
13 periods and heat protection in accordance with the law.
14 We'd like to also see continued and increased employer
15 vigilance from employers in providing employees drinkable,
16 clean water along with individual cups or fountains for
17 employees in accordance with Cal OSHA.

18 In closing, I'd like to thank you all for being
19 here again. And that's it.

20 FACILITATOR PENNY: Speaker 9, Eileen McCarthy.
21 Then we'll go to speaker 10, Alicia Flores.

22 MS. McCARTHY: Thank you. Good evening,
23 Secretary Kawamura, President Montna, and Members of the
24 Board of Food and Agriculture. I'm also a staff attorney
25 with California Rural Legal Assistance speaking tonight on

1 behalf of lower-income clients of CRLA who are in need of
2 affordable housing, including housing for farm workers.

3 In Ventura County it's been estimated that the
4 number of farm workers ranges between 20- to 30,000, and
5 it's also estimated that approximately two-thirds of
6 Ventura County farm workers are seasonal or permanent farm
7 workers as opposed to migrant workers. Those migrant
8 workers include both unaccompanied workers as well as
9 families.

10 The average rent for housing in Ventura County is
11 \$1500 for an apartment. In order to be paying not more
12 than 30 percent of your income for that rent, which is how
13 "affordable" is defined under state and federal law, a
14 working family would have to earn approximately three
15 times that amount, which comes out to about \$60,000 a
16 year. The average income for farm workers is estimated to
17 be about \$17,000 a year; sometimes it's lower if you're
18 not working as much, sometimes it's higher, for example,
19 if you have three or four members of the household who are
20 working.

21 So when you do those -- compare those statistics,
22 you see that the need for increased farm worker housing
23 that is affordable, decent, safe and sanitary is great.
24 And this isn't just the case in Ventura County, it's
25 really the case throughout California. And we would hope

1 that the Board and that the Secretary would be concerned
2 about this, be concerned about the fact that there are not
3 sufficient funds available to develop housing for farm
4 workers, both permanent and migrant, and again, both for
5 families who are migrant as well as unaccompanied workers.

6 Locally in Ventura County I've been working with
7 a group called House Farm Workers. There was a
8 representative from that group who spoke this morning.
9 We've been very active. This jurisdiction is under an
10 obligation right now to develop something called a Housing
11 Element; some of you may be familiar with that.

12 By June 30th, 2008, I want to report to you that
13 not one single jurisdiction in Ventura County as we speak
14 is actually in compliance with the law having met that
15 deadline, but we're hoping that within the next year, the
16 jurisdictions will do what they're supposed to do with
17 regard to planning for housing, and this includes
18 specifically planning for farm worker housing. Farm
19 workers are a special-need category under Housing Element
20 law; jurisdictions have to analyze that need, talk about
21 how they're going to meet that need, and sometimes, most
22 importantly, talk about where the land is where that
23 housing can be built.

24 And fortunately, there's been progress in Ventura
25 County, Oxnard in particular, where you're holding this,

1 has got the greatest record in terms of increasing housing
2 for all lower-income households, but including farm
3 workers, some of that was done with carrots and some of it
4 was done with sticks. CRLA was part of the litigation,
5 but in the end what's important is that we get the housing
6 built.

7 So we would hope that your group would work
8 closely with other state agencies. We are in contact with
9 the State Department of Housing and Community Development,
10 who oversees the creation of housing elements. We do make
11 comment to them as each of the jurisdictions in Ventura
12 County is going through their process with regard to our
13 assessment of the degree to which these jurisdictions have
14 complied with the law.

15 And so we thank you for holding this meeting, for
16 hearing from the community. I'm sure if you did a survey
17 of this right now and talked to people in terms of what
18 their circumstances are, many of them are living in
19 over-crowded circumstances, if they are not over-paying,
20 it's often because you have people renting one room inside
21 a house. And so it's, it really is in a crisis state.
22 And you can't have a functioning workforce if basically
23 people are coming to work from those kinds of
24 circumstances or children are trying to attend schools
25 from those kinds of circumstances. So we certainly would

1 appreciate any effort that this body can make and the
2 Secretary can make towards increasing housing for farm
3 workers.

4 PRESIDENT MONTNA: Eileen, we know it's not
5 enough and we know that Oxnard -- we did take the
6 opportunity to tour a facility in town this afternoon, the
7 Board did, and our compliments to how nice of a facility
8 it was, right in the middle of town, about 25 units, young
9 man named Alex was managing it, and very well done. And
10 we all know the need and we know there are not enough, but
11 that seems to be a great start.

12 MS. McCARTHY: Yes, it is, a model for the state.

13 FACILITATOR PENNY: So before we go to speaker
14 10, Alicia Flores and then speaker 11, Magdeleno Aguilar,
15 we want to make an announcement. If you would like help
16 with interpreting English to Spanish or Spanish to
17 English, there are headsets in the corner.

18 And now we're going to have the same announcement
19 in Spanish for others for whom that's easier.

20 (Whereupon the interpreter repeated the previous
21 announcement in Spanish.)

22 MS. FLORES: Good evening, Members of the Board.
23 My name is Alicia Flores, and I am the Executive Director
24 of (unintelligible), and we also work with farm workers
25 and we've been working very hard for immigration reform in

1 the ag job. And we're not in favor of the visas for bring
2 more people just to come and work as they leave their
3 families back home. And we're not -- we're not in favor
4 of that because that could lead to a lot of -- for the
5 employers to -- how do you say that -- for have the people
6 like slaves, you know, so we're not in favor of that.

7 Myself, I'm an immigrant and I also work in the
8 fields until 1980. Back then they used to pay us the
9 minimum at the strawberry -- box of strawberry, they would
10 pay us \$1.25, and after 30 years I believe now it's \$1.75,
11 if I'm not mistaken. And also we needed to work ten hours
12 a day before we get over paid, or 60 hours a week before
13 we can get over pay, part time. And so I believe that --
14 why, that's my question, why the farm workers need to work
15 ten hours a day when it's hard work.

16 I believe instead of asking for affordable
17 housings, we need to pay them for what they work. It's a
18 very hard work, and they need to be paid as people from
19 the construction, you know, 15, \$20 per hour, because it
20 is true that our family needs to rent, two or three
21 families, they rent one house in order for them to be able
22 to pay. That was my income back then in the 1980s, 15,000
23 a year; in 30 years it's still the same. So I think we do
24 need to do something about it. And the question here,
25 it's what is my vision in 2030. I don't think that we

1 need to go that far. We need to do it now.

2 And also I really -- we were also fighting very
3 hard for the people to have their driver's license; it's a
4 necessity, it's not a luxury. We see people every day in
5 our office because they're either being separated or their
6 families or when they don't have a driver's license they
7 get stopped and also they get -- they get arrested and
8 re-sent back home. And it's very true that when they try
9 to come back home, because this is their home, even though
10 they're not documented yet, and but a lot of them, they
11 get, you know, they died, or when they want to legalize
12 the status, they can't because they're, that's a criminal,
13 how the law is right now, the immigration allow, if you
14 cross the border two or three times, you cannot legalize,
15 you get penalize for five to ten years.

16 So there's a lot that we need to do with the
17 immigration reform and also with the pay with our
18 families. Thank you.

19 SECRETARY KAWAMURA: Thank you.

20 PRESIDENT MONTANA: Very much.

21 FACILITATOR PENNY: Speaker 11, Magdeleno
22 Aguilar. Then speaker 12, Celestino Huerta.

23 MS. AGUILAR: Good afternoon to everybody here.
24 My vision is in the year 2030 is that there should be a
25 legalization and better salaries. And how do you say it,

1 for the people who don't have medical benefits, I would
2 like there to be one for migrants as well. And better
3 treatment of all field workers. And also a license, that
4 you have pity on us, because sometimes as my colleague
5 here present said earlier, sometimes we drive with a great
6 deal of fear, drive to work, because we don't know when we
7 might lose our car, and then we have no way to get to
8 work.

9 And I think that's all, because I don't have more
10 words. Thank you very much.

11 FACILITATOR PENNY: Speaker 12, Celestino Huerta.
12 And then speaker 13, Jaime Ceja.

13 MR. HUERTA: Hi, good evening, everyone. First
14 of all, I would like to thank each and every one of you
15 for being here this afternoon to you for listening perhaps
16 of the problems or the greater needs that exist in the
17 field.

18 First of all, my vision for 2030 would be to
19 request God for assistance to permit me to live until
20 then, but if that doesn't happen, perhaps for my children,
21 to ask God to give them life and preserve their life until
22 then, but not how I've lived, farm work. I am a farm
23 worker as well, and honestly, quite sadly, well, I
24 actually don't cry because maybe I still have a little bit
25 of courage left, but honestly, farm work, it's extremely

1 hard. And I wouldn't want as a father to leave that
2 legacy for my children. And if it were that way, I would
3 like to leave them a legacy, but a productive legacy for
4 them to see that it's really working and the progress has
5 been made.

6 You know, that person who studies wants to be
7 someone someday, they don't want to stay in the same
8 place. Just like that, us fathers want a better future
9 for our children. What is the best future that we see?
10 If we sat here and just chatted, well, it's not enough in
11 five minutes, but we'd actually like to have two and three
12 hours to really put out and layout the needs that we have
13 as farm workers. The greatest need is immigration reform,
14 to walk about freely without having to be concerned.
15 Second is for it to be a way or to have somebody that
16 represents us with greater freedom, not with a barrier
17 that we have now that does not allow us to talk to our
18 employers or the companies that we work at freely. We
19 would like to have a law that would protect us more.

20 And more things that I really can't think of
21 right now; but honestly, those of us who are here and
22 those of us who are farm workers, we do know that there's
23 great need. So I would like to just, as has been said, we
24 do have a vision for 2030, but we actually we would like
25 it to start today when we leave this office. But I'm not

1 sure how much you could help us with. We would really
2 thank you if you did, if you really put a little bit of
3 effort to help us.

4 But thank you again for being with us, for
5 listening to our needs and thank each and every one at
6 this office to be here with us. Thank you. That's all.

7 PRESIDENT MONTANA: Carolyn, Celestino talked
8 about not having enough time. But written comments can be
9 made in any length to us personally or through our
10 website.

11 So, Celestino, written comments can be made of
12 any length. So even though you may not have enough time
13 today, we will accept two or three hours' worth of written
14 comments and we will read them. So please feel free to do
15 that. Thank you.

16 FACILITATOR PENNY: Speaker 13, Jaime Ceja.

17 MR. CEJA: Good evening, Members of the
18 Committee. My name is Jaime Ceja, and I am a resident of
19 Oxnard. And I thank all of you first of all for allowing
20 for this meeting to happen and to give us the opportunity
21 to express ourselves for 2030's vision.

22 I'm going to say what is the vision for
23 California for 2030? My parents work in the fields, and I
24 want those who work in agriculture to have better housing.
25 Cabrillo Economic Development Corporation's office has

1 been doing great effort to provide housing for farm
2 workers, but I feel that it's not enough. We need greater
3 housing in the state for people who are undocumented and
4 those for who are not undocumented, because we can get
5 documented workers, but what happens with those who do not
6 have their resident cards who are not documented? If you
7 could do an effort to push for better housing now.

8 These people get up quite early in the morning to
9 work in something that is very hard. One of the hardest
10 jobs with less pay. I have not been able to understand
11 that. If you could answer that and answer that for me and
12 for the rest of us present, I would be very thankful. But
13 one of the hardest works and with awful pay, these people
14 really deserve better pay.

15 One of -- something else I wanted to mention was
16 in regards to transportation. Now, gas has been rising a
17 lot. And where is the money? Money left goes to rent, to
18 food. And where is entertainment for children of these
19 families, for them to live better in our society? If we
20 had better transportation, or that would be a little bit
21 better. Let me explain. Sometime back ag companies had
22 transportation busses, they picked up people. So instead
23 of moving forward, we're going backwards. So my vision
24 for 2030 is to have transportation for workers, because
25 with gas prices, it's not going to be possible.

1 A lot of family, a lot of agricultural families
2 don't know anything except for parks because they're close
3 by. I've talked to a lot of people in agriculture, if
4 they've gone to a park for instance, the one that's by
5 Valencia, the one we have really close by, Six Flags Magic
6 Mountain; they don't know that. They know Golf and Stuff,
7 they don't know that. They don't know recreation things
8 that children need to know to be good students, to be good
9 people in society.

10 I am a person, my parents work and still do work
11 in agriculture, so I'm talking on their behalf and on
12 behalf of all the people that did have an education,
13 because I had an education, thanks to the federal program,
14 the federal program, basically the one that builds
15 apartments by Cabrillo Economic Corporation where you pay
16 30 percent, and now I am a manager of that type of
17 dwellings. And people do need that type of dwellings
18 because before they used to live like three families to
19 one place and nobody would help them. And this type of
20 housing, we continue working towards education, English
21 classes, nutrition, education.

22 Now, let's touch upon education, and I'm
23 referring to education to foremen and supervisors. The
24 people that working in agriculture, they're not dumb,
25 they're not animals, they need respect. When you talk --

1 when a foreman talks to a worker, it's my understanding
2 from what I've been told that they are not talked to,
3 they're yelled at. So if we put some efforts in educating
4 supervisors and foremen to treat people with greater
5 respect, people will work more, better, and more at peace
6 without this pressure. Because they come home with all
7 this pressure from being yelled at all day, and what
8 happens? The children see all this. And there's fights
9 with their partners, and children are picking up all this.

10 Now, let me talk about pesticides. Please push
11 for greater education for workers as well as farmers in
12 regards to pesticides. They used to fly over and spray
13 over people's heads. We have improved that, well, at
14 least they're not doing that anymore, but now they're
15 spraying, and for the next day people are already working
16 there and it's freshly sprayed. And it's my understanding
17 that some days need to go by or week needs to go by for
18 them not to collect those pesticides from the field. They
19 get on clothes. And what happens? After work they go
20 home, the wife washes, handles the clothes, children, you
21 know, take the dad's boots off, and what's happened? They
22 are pouring in pesticides to their homes and their
23 children and their wives being polluted by these
24 pesticides. So if when they irrigate, irrigate ranches,
25 please push for not sending the workers the following day

1 after it's been sprayed.

2 These people need -- I'll conclude now. They
3 need greater respect than they are afforded because they
4 are very humble workers. They come to the United States
5 to earn money, and on the contrary they are helping the
6 economy. So, please, I demand that you also push for
7 greater respect for these people. Thank you.

8 PRESIDENT MONTANA: Thank you, Jaime.

9 FACILITATOR PENNY: Speaker 14, Petra Soto.

10 MS. SOTO: Hello, good afternoon. My name is
11 Petra Soto. And first of all I want to thank you for
12 having come here to the City of Oxnard. We are very proud
13 to have you here and to express our needs first of all.

14 And listening to all my colleagues who work in
15 the field, we explain our needs to you. And first of all,
16 what's going to happen between here and 2030. First of
17 all, I ask God to let me live for another 20 years, but I
18 want to ask you as well, what is going to happen with us
19 field workers in the meantime? 30 years from now, who's
20 going to tell us that we'll be alive?

21 What we want as field workers as of today. We
22 would like the treatment to be changed in the field. I
23 work in the strawberries and I see so many injustices that
24 we workers suffer. I feel a huge need for somebody to
25 represent us. What is a representation; a union that

1 would let us know what our rights are in this country,
2 because many times we feel that since we're not -- we
3 don't -- we're undocumented, we don't have rights, and we
4 have to lower, hide our faces because we can't express our
5 ideas. And as field workers we want there to be a union
6 that will represent us, express to us, tell us what our
7 working rights are.

8 We want medical benefits for our children. I
9 have three children; we don't have medical plan, we don't
10 have Medi-Cal. Many times what we earn -- what I earn in
11 the week barely is sufficient to pay the bills, the rent,
12 food; and if they get sick, what am I going to do? I
13 don't have money to take them to a doctor. I don't have a
14 plan that will help me for their health. So this is what
15 we want, we workers.

16 It's very sad, as somebody mentioned, it's very
17 sad when one shows up from the field real stressed out and
18 run with your children and you can't be with them. I
19 don't know how to read or write, that's why I work the
20 strawberry fields. And I like, that's my job, I like it,
21 I enjoy it, but we also want better salaries. We're not
22 asking for something that can't be achieved, we are asking
23 for something fair. We want better salaries.

24 As a mother I want to be able to give my children
25 sufficient food and not show up all stressed out from the

1 work and not be able to even help them with their
2 homework. It's very, very disheartening to reach that
3 point. That's why I say, I hope all of these ideas that
4 we're putting -- that we're expressing our needs to you,
5 so that you do something for us, that you help us, that
6 you support us, because I could be with my kids right now
7 and yet I'm not there. I wanted to come here to express
8 my needs so that you can do something for us, the field
9 workers.

10 Thank you very much for listening to me. And God
11 willing, I still will be here 30 years for now, but for me
12 it would be very nice if you began from the moment we
13 leave this meeting, that is what we would want. I would
14 like to reach the age of 90, but of the stuff I'm doing in
15 the field, I don't think I'll be able to last another ten
16 years, but I hope that we can reach that moment and see
17 how agriculture is, but I would be much happier if you
18 enforce those laws that are being passed and that you can
19 help us as of right now, not 20, 30 years from now, which
20 I will not be around to see, I think.

21 But thank you very much, and I hope you continue
22 to help us and I hope our testimonials, our needs have
23 expressed our views to you. Thank you very much.

24 FACILITATOR PENNY: Mr. Secretary, Mr. President,
25 that concludes our list of speakers. So as I turn the

1 microphone and the meeting back over to you, I want to
2 thank all of you for doing your jobs so very well.

3 SECRETARY KAWAMURA: Are there any other speakers
4 in case we missed anybody?

5 FACILITATOR PENNY: Not that we have signed up
6 for.

7 PRESIDENT MONTNA: Anyone like to say anything
8 that didn't get to speak?

9 Please, state your name and -- sure, state your
10 name and organization.

11 MR. VEGA: My name is Emil Vega, and I came from
12 Santa Paula and working for Interface. But I -- I go to
13 do this thing in Spanish this moment.

14 It's very important for us to know really where
15 we are right now and what the situation is at this time.
16 We recognize that our field workers 40 years ago, 30 years
17 ago were earning exactly the same wage they are earning
18 today. It's sad to hear the people when they're speaking,
19 but one of the very important things that comes with all
20 of this is that mothers leave their homes to go to work in
21 the field and the fathers work in the field and the
22 children go to school. Mothers come home frustrated,
23 children stay home. I would very much like that in this
24 program you introduced something more to help those
25 children.

1 The parents are undocumented, the children are
2 citizens with all the rights they will have one day here,
3 but those children need the education that they should
4 have because of the sacrifices of the parents.

5 I just want to say to those parents who are
6 suffering at this time, that everything you have done is
7 not in vain, because you will see in your children the
8 fruit. But if we do not educate and prepare those
9 children, many problems will occur.

10 Education of our youth is the most important
11 thing at this time and for the young people of migrant
12 workers, very, very important. Thank you.

13 FACILITATOR PENNY: So I'll repeat the request.
14 Is there anyone else who wishes to speak who has not yet
15 spoken?

16 PRESIDENT MONTNA: Again, we'd like to thank you
17 all very much for taking your evening to come and visit
18 with us. We'll have Secretary Kawamura make the closing
19 comments, and then after his comments we will adjourn. I
20 just wanted to take the opportunity to thank you.

21 Any comments from the Board before we do that?

22 BOARD MEMBER ROSS: I want to say something.

23 I want to thank all of you because you listened
24 to our Secretary and you told us what was in your heart,
25 and I really appreciate it. Thank you.

1 SECRETARY KAWAMURA: Anybody else?

2 BOARD MEMBER BRANSFORD: I too would like to
3 thank you all for coming. I sit on a school board in a
4 community in the Sacramento valley of 3500 students, it's
5 about 60 percent Hispanic, and I know what a challenge it
6 is for many of you to come and speak. And I applaud you
7 for doing that. I know for some just coming to a meeting
8 like this might be frightful. And your voices need to be
9 heard; and it is so important that you speak up as you did
10 tonight when you have these opportunities. Thank you.

11 BOARD MEMBER HALLSTROM: Tonight has been a great
12 opportunity for all of us to change things, to see things
13 that -- to see that we can do things better together.
14 We've been visiting other places, several days now, to
15 talk and to hear; and with this time that you are giving
16 us, we can do a better job for everybody here and for the
17 foremen and for you as well.

18 Thank you very much.

19 SECRETARY KAWAMURA: First I want to thank Maria
20 Chavez, Maria Chavez of -- where are you? Maria Chavez is
21 in charge of this here. Thank you very much for helping
22 us.

23 And this is interesting. The last person
24 speaking, my uncle was born in Santa Paula, and it's
25 interesting because my grandparents who arrived from Japan

1 100 years ago came in more or less to this region, and my
2 parents were -- my father was a fisherman and a packer of
3 citrus, a citrus picker and packer. And they began in
4 this region and moved to Los Angeles afterwards.

5 And I have to say I know that all of us here, we
6 all have the good fortune of having health, being here,
7 we always have differences between where we are born and
8 the good fortune, and that may or may not arrive, but
9 we're all here. And as we have said, we're not waiting
10 for 30 years from now, we can begin things, we can make
11 changes, we can begin to work together in cooperation
12 seeking -- with the intention that we are a family of
13 agriculture. That is very important to me.

14 These listening sessions are really something
15 that are necessary. Why? Because many of the people in
16 California, many people do not understand a thing about
17 agriculture. We in this room, we do, we understand a
18 great deal about agriculture, we're people, we're part of
19 the agriculture family; but outside there are many people
20 in California who have no idea, don't understand a thing
21 about agriculture.

22 We are where the food comes from, how much work
23 is involved, how hard it is. This is part of the test
24 that we have to do to -- the work it takes to get to work
25 when cold and rain and heat. We know in here, but not

1 outside, they don't know. So this is the opportunity to
2 make a note about the culture of agriculture. This is
3 something that's very important.

4 And I'm going to say thank you to all of you for
5 sharing your thoughts, your experiences as well. And
6 we're going to say that I have -- I have a great deal of
7 optimism that it can be done if we work together. So
8 thank you very much, most especially for coming so late in
9 the evening. I hope you can all have a good night's
10 sleep. We're going to San Diego today and we're going to
11 hear other people in agriculture.

12 So I have nothing more to add unless there are
13 questions for me.

14 MS. FLORES: My question is I think the majority
15 of us -- I think we're all asking ourselves what is going
16 to be done with wages? It's been mentioned 30 years ago
17 we earned the same wages we earn today. I think that's
18 the million-dollar question. It's very important.
19 Important. What is going to be done about salaries and
20 wages? I think that's where it would have to begin.
21 Because, yes, there is a union that represents farm
22 workers, but unfortunately, I don't think they have done
23 much because salaries remain the same. And most of us
24 don't have medical coverage. And I think that if you
25 could give us a brief response or comment on wages. Thank

1 you.

2 SECRETARY KAWAMURA: Thank you. We are
3 listening, and various other sessions, that these four
4 things, the living wage where one can have protection,
5 safety and security, health security, we're talking about
6 transportation problems and also where one can live, and
7 the other one that's already there, what are we going to
8 do with the reform.

9 When we talk about wages, I wish there were an
10 easy solution. I have to say that one of the problems
11 that we're hearing when there are people and there are
12 companies that are not paying legally, overtime, all the
13 other things, that is not correct. And at least what we
14 can do -- what we have to do is to ensure that the laws
15 are complied with. All companies.

16 Someone mentioned a while ago there are foremen
17 or bosses who mistreat the people. In this year, 2008, we
18 cannot have that. There are laws. And there should be
19 protection. So, yes, we are going to continue pressuring
20 to ensure that the laws are complied with by all
21 companies, contractors or employers or any employer. That
22 is one thing.

23 An increase in wages, that is something that --
24 it can arrive with this attention on agriculture in
25 general. Many people say you can't produce it in

1 California, we'll buy it from China, it's cheaper. Many
2 people say this sort of thing. That's where I am saying,
3 we have to get together, all of us in agriculture, and
4 begin stating that the production of -- agricultural
5 production here in California has a value. And it has an
6 extra value because it is produced here. There's less
7 pollution and more attention to the environment. All of
8 these things also must lead to a better price. And that
9 is where I think, my opinion, where we can give more.

10 MS. FLORES: Excuse me for interrupting. With
11 your response, you're telling me that we, field workers,
12 are slaves, because you say if not, they're going to bring
13 it from China.

14 SECRETARY KAWAMURA: No, I believe I'm
15 misunderstood. I am saying that there are many people,
16 stores, especially stores, many people who are happy to
17 buy agricultural products from other countries. Why?
18 Because they're cheaper. That is where the imbalance
19 exists.

20 MS. FLORES: That's why I asked, that's what I
21 misunderstood.

22 SECRETARY KAWAMURA: I apologize.

23 MS. FLORES: Thank you. Also, I think if we
24 could do something to increase wages of field workers,
25 because as I mentioned earlier, people in the field have

1 to work ten hours before they pay them overtime, time and
2 a half, whereas other workers only eight workers. I think
3 there's something there that needs to be done as well.
4 Thank you.

5 SECRETARY KAWAMURA: Thank you.

6 FACILITATOR PENNY: Secretary Kawamura and
7 President Montna, we do have another speaker who would
8 like a moment with you as well. Arsenio Lopez. And then
9 Jaime Ceja, you want to be next?

10 MR. LOPEZ: Good afternoon. My name is Arsenio
11 Lopez, community worker here in Ventura County. There's a
12 question of some people who are here present. One of
13 their petitions is a point that they have of having more
14 opportunities to work in the fields. There are fields in
15 Santa Paula that they would like to be preserved, that's
16 one point of one person.

17 And in representation of other colleagues, I
18 would like to say thank you for allowing us to provide our
19 opinions, our idea, our vision for agriculture. As field
20 workers, I think it's an opportunity for us to express
21 everything that we have as a vision as -- that we have as
22 ag workers in California. So we want to thank you deeply
23 for the opportunity and the representation of all my
24 colleagues here, we thank you, and also at the specific
25 request of my colleagues, thank you.

1 MR. CEJA: I have a question. My question is is
2 there some sort of a website where you can look at the
3 progress being made or, you know, there's a lot of
4 injustice towards workers, but they don't want to step up
5 because they form groups, and then when it's time to go to
6 the office, they back off and they just leave one person
7 in front. So the fear of reporting issues. But is there
8 a place where we can say, okay, where we anonymously file
9 without anybody knowing, is there a particular site or
10 place that we can do this for us to know?

11 SECRETARY KAWAMURA: Yes. Specifically with the
12 assistance of the different organizations that are here,
13 we do have a website. It's called agvision@cdfa.ca.gov.
14 You ask can ask or you can come and ask us if you'd like.

15 Deputy Secretary, do you want to make a comment?

16 DEPUTY SECRETARY JONES: Sure.

17 SECRETARY KAWAMURA: This is the Deputy Secretary
18 of the Department of Labor.

19 DEPUTY SECRETARY JONES: First of all, I want to
20 thank you for inviting me on behalf of Secretary Bradshaw
21 to attend these meetings. And we have one more tomorrow
22 if we get there.

23 My name is Robert Jones. I'm the Deputy
24 Secretary for the Workforce and Development Agency, Labor
25 and Workforce Development Agency out of Sacramento. Our

1 agency represents or includes within it not only the Labor
2 Commissioner, Cal OSHA, Workers' Compensation, but also
3 the Agriculture Labor Relations Board. And we have a very
4 keen interest in a lot of the issues that were raised here
5 tonight.

6 And one of the things that I'm most concerned
7 about -- there are two things I'm very concerned about.
8 One is the ability of farm workers to be able to
9 communicate to the agency without fear so that we can, in
10 fact, get the proper investigations done of those problems
11 that you have. And this can be done.

12 And we have a law in California that says we do
13 not look at the documentation of employees, we cannot take
14 that into consideration; it's 1171.5 of the Labor Code.
15 And the people who work for our agencies are very sincere
16 in making sure that that is enforced and that in fact the
17 information that you give us is not information that we
18 consider in any way with respect to whether workers are
19 documented or not.

20 The second thing, if you have concerns, there's
21 the Bureau of Field Investigation of the Labor
22 Commissioner that can investigate those issues. In fact,
23 we cooperate with CRLA and other groups on a regular
24 basis, especially right now where we're having all the
25 heat stress problems. I'm on my way to Blythe tomorrow

1 night. So I mean, these are all areas that we're very
2 interested in seeing what we can do to protect your
3 rights.

4 The second thing that -- and if you will make
5 those reports, and you don't have to make them yourself,
6 you can make them through the unions that represent you
7 and through the groups like California Rural Legal, and we
8 will in fact act on those complaints. And I think that
9 we've become -- we've very much improved in our ability to
10 do that. And if there are problems, I need to know about
11 it.

12 The second thing that I'm also concerned about is
13 the retaliation against workers who file claims. If in
14 fact claims are filed for wages that are due, we have an
15 entire agency, which is very much backlogged, but we have
16 an agency that the purpose of that agency is to make sure
17 that there isn't retaliation against workers. Of course
18 it raises the problem that we can't force employers to
19 take workers back who don't have the legal right to work.
20 So we can get you everything that's owed to you; the one
21 thing we can't do under federal law is get you reinstated.
22 And I'd like to see that fixed. And of course that's
23 something that requires action in Washington, and I cannot
24 possibly comment on that right now or I'll be at a hearing
25 someplace.

1 So we do want to make sure that all workers know
2 that they have the right to file claims, that we will
3 investigate those claims. And if you know, especially, of
4 hazardous situations in fields, especially right now, if
5 you know of situations where there's not proper shade,
6 you're not allowed to take rests, and there's not clean
7 water available to you within a close walking distance of
8 where you're working, we need to know that immediately and
9 we will investigate it immediately.

10 And so I thank you for this opportunity to
11 provide you that information. There is a website that you
12 can find this information on, which is under the
13 Department of Industrial Relations; [www.dir.ca.gov\blse](http://www.dir.ca.gov/blse) is
14 where you would find the information you're looking for
15 generally. So we also have a new hotline number which
16 we're starting to advertise in the fields which -- I'd
17 have to look it up, I didn't realize I was going to come
18 and speak to you, but if you do want to know it, I'll give
19 it to you, I have it in my briefcase. So thank you very
20 much.

21 MR. HUERTA: I think that we've heard from all of
22 us who have spoken, we've talked a lot about wages here,
23 but I think that you would like to take an idea as to
24 pretty much what we're talking about, why we complain so
25 much about our wages and we all talk about wages. I want

1 you to take with you a more specific idea and for all of
2 you to write down please in your notes approximately from
3 the people who work here that work in the field, they'll
4 back me on this. Here's a question for you, and at the
5 same time it's an answer to what we've been talking about.

6 When we talk about wages and we complain about
7 wages, it's because we are making on average approximately
8 \$350 per week, maybe 400 tops; and as a question for you,
9 do you think that that is a fair wage for us? What do you
10 think? Is it a fair wage, \$350 per week or 400, when one
11 person earns -- when a person pays \$1,200 in rent, having,
12 you know, your spouse with you, I think \$350 a week is not
13 a fair wage for us. That is why we are here and really
14 fight for wages. What are we going to do?

15 You know, it's been talked about for 30 years,
16 wages are the same as 30 years ago, but rent goes up, gas
17 goes up, food goes up, everything. So that's what we're
18 looking at the future, 30 more years, and we'll still be
19 earning \$300 a week or 350? That's why I wanted to
20 express to you, and at the same time the question, do you
21 think that 350 or \$400 a week is fair for us?

22 MR. HERNANDEZ: Well, I think this is a really
23 good opportunity, and I'm glad actually some of these
24 issues have come up because the piece I wanted to share at
25 the end of my comments was that I think this is a very

1 good example of mutual learning that's taking place,
2 learning from both the Board's perspective and learning
3 from the community's perspective. And the question to me
4 around, you know, where we are at now and where we go
5 forward with this California ag vision process is how do
6 we make sure that this vision is not only bought into by
7 CDFA but by also those other agencies that have
8 responsibilities over agriculture, such as the Department
9 of Labor, such as Cal EPA, and that it doesn't stay in
10 Sacramento but actually comes down into Ventura County and
11 Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo, that the ag
12 commissioners in each of these 52 counties that are in
13 California are also a part of and bought into this
14 collective vision that we are trying to create.

15 And part of these challenges is a recognition of,
16 you know, the self-interest of the people who are going to
17 be at the table. This morning I heard a lot about, you
18 know, from the other side, the over-regulation, right?
19 And so there's a lot of self-interest that needs to be
20 met. I think what's important to understand is that when
21 we talk about self-interest, it's about recognizing that
22 it's our needs among everyone else's and that it's not
23 just me or it's not just farm workers that are in need and
24 it's not just growers that are in need, it's that we all
25 have challenges that we have to face, and sometimes those

1 realities are really difficult.

2 And we don't want to have the conversations --
3 I'll tell you, I was one of the original founding members
4 of Ag Futures Alliance, and it took us a year, a year of
5 discussions just to agree on how we were going to talk,
6 right? And so this is not an easy process. And I
7 understand and I think that as we engage each other more
8 in this and as we as the public are informed as to what
9 your next steps are going to be and where you're going to
10 take all of this, I think we will be at a much better
11 place to recognize our collective responsibilities in
12 making this vision a reality.

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EDDY: And, Caesar, could you
14 state your name for the record, please.

15 MR. HERNANDEZ: My name is Caesar Hernandez, with
16 CAUSE.

17 SECRETARY KAWAMURA: So in closing, I would like
18 to say a few things. First of all, this process, we're
19 going to several places, we're going to San Diego, I think
20 we're still going to arrive in San Francisco and
21 Los Angeles, and we're going to bring together all of this
22 information and we're going to make a plan, an ag vision
23 plan as a draft document -- a proposal. Thank you.

24 I should speak in English I guess.

25 But we're going to have another opportunity for

1 comments from the leaders of all the different stakeholder
2 groups, groups that are represented. We're also going to
3 present this to the Governor, and the Governor's going to
4 give us his opinion of what he wants to do or not.

5 Before all of this process -- I have to say one
6 thing. And in the previous three or four years, in all
7 the United States, many people are working together who
8 were not working together in the past, but they worked
9 together on the farm bill. The farm bill we have this
10 year signed barely two, three weeks ago is different, and
11 why? Because for the first time many people worked with
12 an idea, a vision of changing the attitude of the federal
13 government, the investment that the United States, this
14 country is going to make in agriculture each year. And
15 California was never part of this document, of the farm
16 bill. The farm bill is the law as far as agriculture is
17 concerned in the United States, and California was never
18 involved.

19 But what happened is that many people working
20 together in the field of hunger and the field of
21 conservation, of the environment, and surely all the
22 people who grow vegetables and specialty crops and other
23 parts, were working. And what happened also is that we
24 worked with other agencies here in California, with the
25 Department of Labor, the resources, the people of EPA, and

1 we worked together, the people from health services,
2 working together with the support of the Governor.

3 Our Governor signed a letter with the Governor of
4 New York, of Florida, and the Governor of Texas, and it
5 was a letter to the leaders in Washington D.C. saying we
6 have to change agriculture. And you know what, that is
7 what happened. It changed. It's not perfect. We're
8 going to continue to refine, to re-make these things, but
9 with this incident, with this legislation, they have given
10 us a great deal of hope, a belief that this process can
11 have results, and that is why we're here.

12 So thank you, all of you, for your presence, for
13 your help, your words, and most importantly, thank you
14 again for all the work that you are doing every day for us
15 and California. Thank you very much.

16 (Thereupon, the July 7, 2008,
17 California Department of
18 Food and Agriculture
19 Vision Listening Session
20 was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

I, TROY RAY, an Electronic Reporter, do hereby certify that I am a disinterested person herein; that I recorded the foregoing California Department of Food and Agriculture California Farm Bill Listening Session; that thereafter the recording was transcribed.

I further certify that I am not counsel or attorney for any of the parties to said Listening Session, or in any way interested in the outcome of said Listening Session.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 21st day of July, 2008.

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