PUBLIC MEETING

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

OXNARD CITY HALL

COMMUNITY ROOM

300 WEST THIRD STREET

OXNARD, CALIFORNIA

MONDAY, JULY 7, 2008

6:00 P.M.

Reported by:
Troy Ray

PETERS SHORTHAND REPORTING CORPORATION (916) 362-2345
A P P E A R A N C E S

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PUBLIC SPEAKERS

Gloria Roman, CAUSE

Caesar Hernandez, CAUSE and Poder Popular

Salvador Rivera

Maria Zagal, Poder Popular of Santa Paula

Graciela Selvia, Poder Popular

Jesus Torres, Office of State Assemblymember Pedro Nava

Erica Fernandez

Andreis Garcia, Migrant Unit, California Rural Legal Assistance

Eileen McCarthy, California Rural Legal Assistance

Alicia Flores

Magdeleno Aguilar

Celestino Huerta

Jaime Ceja

Petra Soto

Emil Vega

Arsenio Lopez

Robert Jones, Labor and Workforce Development Agency
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PETERS SHORTHAND REPORTING CORPORATION  (916) 362-2345
PRESIDENT MONTNA: My name is Alfredo Montna. I'm from Yuba City, California, and I am President of the State Board of Food and Agriculture. With us tonight are our Members of our State Board, and I'd like them to introduce themselves, starting on my left, Mr. Meyers.

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

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

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

BOARD MEMBER HALLSTROM: Buenos Tardes. (In Spanish with no translation.)
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EDDY: Hello. I'm Josh Eddy, the Executive Director of the State Board of Food and Agriculture.

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

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

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

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

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

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

PRESIDENT MONTNA: Mr. Secretary.

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

SECRETARY KAWAMURA: Welcome. Thank you very
much. Good afternoon. My name is Arturo Kawamura. I am a producer in Orange County. And we're still in Orange County, aside from the tons of asphalt between the buildings, but there is still agriculture there. But a large part of the reason we are here is because if there is no plan for agriculture in California, the future is more development of agricultural land for more homes, buildings, apartments, no agriculture. So we need an idea, we need a vision of where we want to go. So we're here to try to hear from you, from all the people in California who are part of agriculture. And the truth is, all citizens, everybody who lives here, all the population of California has to support agriculture. Why? Because we all eat. And we're here to listen; we want to hear and look forward, look ahead to the year 2030. Where are we going? Where do we want to arrive? And if we don't want to -- if we don't have a significant vision in our heads of where we want to go, who knows where we'll wind up being. It is possible we may lose a great deal of our ability here in California to continue part of this agriculture. We know about the competition worldwide, we know it's huge. And there are many regions in the world that can produce the same things we produce here. So a very important thing is what is the value,
what is the value of agriculture? The value has to be more than just food; it's the people, it's all the communities, the families who are working in and around agriculture. And we're all part of the agriculture family.

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

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

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

And with that, thank you. And I'm very anxious
to hear from you, everything you have within you.

PRESIDENT MONTNA: Mr. Secretary, thank you.

Again, welcome, and thank you for spending your
evening with the State Board of Food and Agriculture.

We're very anxious to hear your testimony in regards to
the ag vision for California through 2030.

And with that --

SECRETARY KAWAMURA: Can I say one more thing?

PRESIDENT MONTNA: Sure, of course.

SECRETARY KAWAMURA: One more thing. I want to
present Jesus Torres from the 35th District Assembly.

Thank you for being here. And, please, my
greetings to Assemblyman Nava. And we heard very clearly
that we need to have a meeting in the afternoons after
working hours, so thank you to him.

PRESIDENT MONTNA: Okay. So thank you very much
again.

And with that, I'd like to introduce Carolyn
Penny, who is our facilitator for this evening.

Carolyn, please.

FACILITATOR PENNY: Buenos tardes. My name is
Carolyn Penny, and my job tonight is to help the meeting
run smoothly. Your jobs will be to speak to the Board and
to listen to each other. The job of the Board is to
listen to you.
Here's how this is going to work: First, you need to know that the session tonight and all of the sessions are made possible in part by grants from the Clarence E. Heller Charitable Foundation and the Colombia Foundation. The session's going to be videotaped and transcribed, so please speak slowly and clearly for the record. Your comments will be put up on the website for CDFA, and the tape will be made available too.

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

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

When you speak, the Board asks you to respond to four questions: What is your vision for California
agriculture by 2030? What will be the biggest challenge in achieving that vision? In 2030 how has the public perception of agriculture changed? And what is a must-have in an ag vision for California? You choose which of those points is most important to you, or you can cover them all in the five minutes.

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

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

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

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

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

So start with speaker 1 up to the microphone, please, Gloria Roman. After that will be Caesar Hernandez.
MS. ROMAN: Good evening, Honorable Secretary Kawamura and Members of the Board for Food and Agriculture. I just want to thank you very much for making this available to some of us that work late, and I really appreciate the time you have taken to hear us.

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

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

Number two is the legal status. Families are being separated and live in constant fear because of their documentation status. And farm workers who are working, they're working and contributing to the agriculture community and they need legal documentation. Even us that
are documented are in fear, or live in fear. Universal health care is number three. 70 percent of the farm workers are uninsured. Farm workers need health insurance. Number four is affordable housing.

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

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

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

I just wanted to share with you a little bit about my experience when I was growing up. I stayed home
and I was a caretaker for my parents, for my siblings, five of them, and I had to make sure that they go to school. But I didn't see my parents. They went to work at dawn. I didn't see them. I send my brothers and sister to school, came back from school, and I didn't see my parents until dusk. Sometimes we were all asleep by the time they got home.

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

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

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

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

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

PRESIDENT MONTNA: Thank you, Gloria.

SECRETARY KAWAMURA: Thank you.

PRESIDENT MONTNA: Gracias.

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

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

The Secretary took one of my lines that I had included in my comments, but it is true, if you don't know
where we're going, any road will take us there. And the fact that we are in this process of beginning to create a vision and to begin to open our imaginations and plant the seeds that will grow to become this collective vision for California agriculture in 2030 is very important.

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

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

Environmental health, to have healthier agricultural practices that continue the important stewardship role that the industry knows and feels is so vital to its own identity.
And social equity, a state where we will commit to working for full inclusion of farm laborers, their families and the communities where they live and work to transform our local regions into healthy, thriving ag communities.

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

One of the greatest challenges in achieving this collective for California agriculture is the lack of comprehensive immigration reform that will continue to provide for a continuous legal status for all workers. The legal status of workers impacts every aspect of their lives and their family members' lives. And although there has been great unified work from worker advocates and growers in pursuing federal immigration reform, there is still a lot more collaborative work that needs to be done. We need to effectively engage other members of the food system's chain, retailers, lenders need to engage. We need to engage in that federal debate for immigration reform. And once we achieve meaningful humane immigration reform, we have to work together to retain the workforce instead of constantly having to import more workers.
There will be many challenges in addition to immigration reform that we will face. The question is can we create a vision that is big enough to match the magnitude of the challenges we face and innovative enough to turn those challenges into opportunities. That vision would incorporate fundamental American values of equality, dignity and justice. And that kind of a vision has to also be compelling enough to inspire people throughout California to work towards its implementation.

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

A must-have in this vision for California is the meaningful participation of the hundreds of thousands of
farm workers that are part of this industry. Tonight is an example of that desire to participate. CDFA needs to broaden their constituency to include farm workers, and there are various steps that the Department can take to ensure this representation, including the possibility or the vision of designating a seat on the CDFA Board for an agricultural worker or an organization that represents ag workers reviewing all existing programs to ensure that the three Es are at the forefront of their work.

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

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

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

Board Member Luawanna Hallstrom is our expert, resident expert on ag jobs and that future. You may want
to spend a little time with her after. But we're very
supportive of that.

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

PRESIDENT MONTEA: Families are the future.

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

MR. HERNANDEZ: Absolutely. And we hope that the
Secretary will take this message to the Governor. And,
you know, through Poder Popular and the efforts of the
California Endowment, you know, there are leaders being
trained across the State of California, and we hope that
some day those leaders will have the capacity and the
ability to sit on a Board and be a part of the discussions
that are so important that take place.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think I see him running for office.

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

FACILITATOR PENNY: Speaker 3, Salvador Rivera.

And then it will be speaker 4, Maria Zagal.

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

One, when we need to get from one job to the other or from south to northern California to continue, follow the crops, we do it very afraid, very insecure, because we do not have a driver's license. I'll be brief.
The next point would be also when we travel to see our family members, our children, to our country of origin, to come back, because we have to come back, work calls us wherever there's work, we have the hands to work it, we need to walk several days crossing the desert.

I've lived this several times, even putting our own lives at risk. That just because we don't have a work permit. As of lately, I've seen a lot of my friends or just people I know to -- that they're moving to different states. And what's going to happen if more farm workers, laborers continue thinking this way? The vision for the future for agriculture in California, it is my opinion that perhaps in a couple of decades, California would have little or no workers.

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

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

MS. ZAGAL: Buenos tardes. My name is Maria Zagal. I represent the group Poder Popular of Santa Paula. My husband works in the field. The future of agriculture is important for our family because for economic health. Our economic health depends on agriculture, just as many other families in our state.
Another point I would like to mention is that for the year 2030, agriculture to be healthier for workers with less pesticides or pesticides that don’t harm us as much and more organic ag production or healthier ag production.

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

That is all. Thank you.

FACILITATOR PENNY: Speaker 5, Graciela Selvia.

Then speaker 6, Jesus Torres.

MS. SELVIA: Good afternoon to everybody. My name is Graciela Selvia. I humbly represent Poder Popular. Thank God and you who give me the opportunity to be able to express what could happen with our planet and the agriculture and the future. This could be the first example.
I am 61 years old, I was in fourth grade when I was eight or nine years old when my teacher named Martha was giving us this lesson. She compared the earth, planet, with an orange, and I brought you a lemon, that has a orange-colored peel and covers a part that looks like a peel. And then that peel covers a white spongy material. And then there's a skin that looks like an onion skin. And even so, the juice is covered by some particles.

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

All my children shall be pursued and they shall be killed because of me, said God. Those who take care of my creation, those who keep quiet, those who cry without
finding counsel and men, I shall be there, said God. And
you must have faith when my body all comes together. In
other words, all the countries of all classes of all
colors, and if we will work together as a team, we can
resolve this huge problem.

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

Now, my vision is when you do build the housing,
I would like you to add in that project a home for
children; not a daycare center, an actual home for
children where young ladies who don't want to study, well,
they can be taught a craft as emergency nurses or as child
care, because this will create jobs for nurses and cooks,
because feeding these children, by feeding these children
the vegetables that we have forgotten about, because they
will be well-known cooks, because in this way the parents
will be able to leave their children there and go to work without any kind of problem. And then they will pick up their children. And we know that the parents will be happy to pay what they pay people who are outside, will pay that institution, the doctor, for any kind of quick emergency. I can say this because we are all children of God and we're all the same.

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

Thank you.

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

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

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Ventura County and beyond.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A community committed to the future of agriculture in working together to find solutions to conflict, challenges is my vision for the future of California agriculture.
Thank you for considering my comments, and again, welcome. Thank you, Pedro Nava.

FACILITATOR PENNY: Speaker 7, Erica Fernandez.

And then will be speaker 8, Adreis Garcia.

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

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

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

Seeing all my family working in the fields is not something to be embarrassed, yet what really makes me
worry is the idea that they kill themselves for nothing. They do not have affordable housing, they do not have a decent living wage nor possess health insurance when they get hurt. In addition, they can't afford to buy healthy food for their children.

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

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

Today I come forward to share my story. I don't see this country being prosperous without agriculture and
farm workers, yet I see it taking the lead on improving their lives and reducing the amount of pesticides used. I hope that in the years to come my people will still have their jobs and also enjoy of a healthy and safe environment.

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

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

PRESIDENT MONTNA: Thank you, Erica.

FACILITATOR PENNY: Speaker 8, Adreis Garcia.

And then speaker 9, Eileen McCarthy.

MR. GARCIA: Tough act to follow. Good evening, Secretary Kawamura, Mr. President, and Members of the Board. My name is Andreis Garcia. I'm a staff attorney with the Migrant Unit for California Rural Legal Assistance here in Oxnard. I'm here speaking tonight on behalf of our lower-income clients. And that being said,
I'd like to thank the Board for opening up this dialog so that we can hear such impassioned pleas like the one we just heard from Miss Fernandez and others as well.

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

Just as agriculture is not viable without growers and natural resources, agriculture is not viable without farm workers. I'd like to focus on two specific issues that our office comes into contact with. Number one, labor and employment violations. We would like to see continued and increased vigilance regarding the enforcement of labor and employment laws and regulations.

While there has been some improvement in this area over the years, we still have a long ways to go.

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

The second issue that I'd like to address is
worker health and safety. Our office would like to see increased and continued enforcement of existing health and safety laws and regulations. Unfortunately we still see individuals who have been exposed to and have become sick from exposure to pesticides. We also continually see individuals that have not been adequately trained on the dangers of pesticides, training that is especially important since farm workers can transport these very dangerous chemicals home to their children and families.

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

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

FACILITATOR PENNY: Speaker 9, Eileen McCarthy.

Then we'll go to speaker 10, Alicia Flores.

MS. McCARTHY: Thank you. Good evening,

Secretary Kawamura, President Montna, and Members of the Board of Food and Agriculture. I'm also a staff attorney with California Rural Legal Assistance speaking tonight on
behalf of lower-income clients of CRLA who are in need of affordable housing, including housing for farm workers.

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

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

So when you do those -- compare those statistics, you see that the need for increased farm worker housing that is affordable, decent, safe and sanitary is great. And this isn't just the case in Ventura County, it's really the case throughout California. And we would hope
that the Board and that the Secretary would be concerned about this, be concerned about the fact that there are not sufficient funds available to develop housing for farm workers, both permanent and migrant, and again, both for families who are migrant as well as unaccompanied workers.

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

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

And fortunately, there's been progress in Ventura County, Oxnard in particular, where you're holding this,
has got the greatest record in terms of increasing housing for all lower-income households, but including farm workers, some of that was done with carrots and some of it was done with sticks. CRLA was part of the litigation, but in the end what's important is that we get the housing built.

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

And so we thank you for holding this meeting, for hearing from the community. I'm sure if you did a survey of this right now and talked to people in terms of what their circumstances are, many of them are living in over-crowded circumstances, if they are not over-paying, it's often because you have people renting one room inside a house. And so it's, it really is in a crisis state. And you can't have a functioning workforce if basically people are coming to work from those kinds of circumstances or children are trying to attend schools from those kinds of circumstances. So we certainly would
appreciate any effort that this body can make and the
Secretary can make towards increasing housing for farm
workers.

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

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

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

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

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

MS. FLORES: Good evening, Members of the Board.

My name is Alicia Flores, and I am the Executive Director
of (unintelligible), and we also work with farm workers
and we've been working very hard for immigration reform in
the ag job. And we're not in favor of the visas for bring
more people just to come and work as they leave their
families back home. And we're not -- we're not in favor
of that because that could lead to a lot of -- for the
employers to -- how do you say that -- for have the people
like slaves, you know, so we're not in favor of that.

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

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

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

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

SECRETARY KAWAMURA: Thank you.

PRESIDENT MONTNA: Very much.

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

MS. AGUILAR: Good afternoon to everybody here.

My vision is in the year 2030 is that there should be a
legalization and better salaries. And how do you say it,
for the people who don't have medical benefits, I would
like there to be one for migrants as well. And better

treatment of all field workers. And also a license, that
you have pity on us, because sometimes as my colleague
here present said earlier, sometimes we drive with a great
deal of fear, drive to work, because we don't know when we
might lose our car, and then we have no way to get to
work.

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

FACILITATOR PENNY: Speaker 12, Celestino Huerta.

And then speaker 13, Jaime Ceja.

MR. HUERTA: Hi, good evening, everyone. First

of all, I would like to thank each and every one of you
for being here this afternoon to you for listening perhaps
of the problems or the greater needs that exist in the
field.

First of all, my vision for 2030 would be to
request God for assistance to permit me to live until
then, but if that doesn't happen, perhaps for my children,
to ask God to give them life and preserve their life until
then, but not how I've lived, farm work. I am a farm
worker as well, and honestly, quite sadly, well, I
actually don't cry because maybe I still have a little bit
of courage left, but honestly, farm work, it's extremely
hard. And I wouldn't want as a father to leave that
legacy for my children. And if it were that way, I would
like to leave them a legacy, but a productive legacy for
them to see that it's really working and the progress has
been made.

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

And more things that I really can't think of
right now; but honestly, those of us who are here and
those of us who are farm workers, we do know that there's
great need. So I would like to just, as has been said, we
do have a vision for 2030, but we actually we would like
it to start today when we leave this office. But I'm not
sure how much you could help us with. We would really
teach you if you did, if you really put a little bit of
effort to help us.

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

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

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

FACILITATOR PENNY: Speaker 13, Jaime Ceja.

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

I'm going to say what is the vision for
California for 2030? My parents work in the fields, and I
want those who work in agriculture to have better housing.
been doing great effort to provide housing for farm
workers, but I feel that it's not enough. We need greater
housing in the state for people who are undocumented and
those for who are not undocumented, because we can get
documented workers, but what happens with those who do not
have their resident cards who are not documented? If you
could do an effort to push for better housing now.

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

One of -- something else I wanted to mention was
in regards to transportation. Now, gas has been rising a
lot. And where is the money? Money left goes to rent, to
food. And where is entertainment for children of these
families, for them to live better in our society? If we
had better transportation, or that would be a little bit
better. Let me explain. Sometime back ag companies had
transportation busses, they picked up people. So instead
of moving forward, we're going backwards. So my vision
for 2030 is to have transportation for workers, because
with gas prices, it's not going to be possible.
A lot of family, a lot of agricultural families
don't know anything except for parks because they're close
by. I've talked to a lot of people in agriculture, if
they've gone to a park for instance, the one that's by
Valencia, the one we have really close by, Six Flags Magic
Mountain; they don't know that. They know Golf and Stuff,
you don't know that. They don't know recreation things
that children need to know to be good students, to be good
people in society.

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

Now, let's touch upon education, and I'm
referring to education to foremen and supervisors. The
people that working in agriculture, they're not dumb,
they're not animals, they need respect. When you talk --
when a foreman talks to a worker, it's my understanding
from what I've been told that they are not talked to,
they're yelled at. So if we put some efforts in educating
supervisors and foremen to treat people with greater
respect, people will work more, better, and more at peace
without this pressure. Because they come home with all
this pressure from being yelled at all day, and what
happens? The children see all this. And there's fights
with their partners, and children are picking up all this.

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

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

PRESIDENT MONTNA: Thank you, Jaime.

FACILITATOR PENNY: Speaker 14, Petra Soto.

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

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

What we want as field workers as of today. We would like the treatment to be changed in the field. I work in the strawberries and I see so many injustices that we workers suffer. I feel a huge need for somebody to represent us. What is a representation; a union that
would let us know what our rights are in this country,
because many times we feel that since we're not -- we
don't -- we're undocumented, we don't have rights, and we
have to lower, hide our faces because we can't express our
ideas. And as field workers we want there to be a union
that will represent us, express to us, tell us what our
working rights are.

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

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

As a mother I want to be able to give my children
sufficient food and not show up all stressed out from the
work and not be able to even help them with their
homework. It's very, very disheartening to reach that
point. That's why I say, I hope all of these ideas that
we're putting -- that we're expressing our needs to you,
so that you do something for us, that you help us, that
you support us, because I could be with my kids right now
and yet I'm not there. I wanted to come here to express
my needs so that you can do something for us, the field
workers.

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

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

FACILITATOR PENNY: Mr. Secretary, Mr. President,
that concludes our list of speakers. So as I turn the
microphone and the meeting back over to you, I want to
thank all of you for doing your jobs so very well.

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

FACILITATOR PENNY: Not that we have signed up
for.

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

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

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

It's very important for us to know really where
we are right now and what the situation is at this time.
We recognize that our field workers 40 years ago, 30 years
ago were earning exactly the same wage they are earning
today. It's sad to hear the people when they're speaking,
but one of the very important things that comes with all
of this is that mothers leave their homes to go to work in
the field and the fathers work in the field and the
children go to school. Mothers come home frustrated,
children stay home. I would very much like that in this
program you introduced something more to help those
children.
The parents are undocumented, the children are citizens with all the rights they will have one day here, but those children need the education that they should have because of the sacrifices of the parents.

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

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

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

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

Any comments from the Board before we do that?

BOARD MEMBER ROSS: I want to say something. I want to thank all of you because you listened to our Secretary and you told us what was in your heart, and I really appreciate it. Thank you.
SECRETARY KAWAMURA: Anybody else?

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

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

    Thank you very much.

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

    And this is interesting. The last person speaking, my uncle was born in Santa Paula, and it's interesting because my grandparents who arrived from Japan
100 years ago came in more or less to this region, and my parents were -- my father was a fisherman and a packer of citrus, a citrus picker and packer. And they began in this region and moved to Los Angeles afterwards.

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

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

We are where the food comes from, how much work is involved, how hard it is. This is part of the test that we have to do to -- the work it takes to get to work when cold and rain and heat. We know in here, but not
outside, they don't know. So this is the opportunity to
make a note about the culture of agriculture. This is
something that's very important.

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

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

MS. FLORES: My question is I think the majority
of us -- I think we're all asking ourselves what is going
to be done with wages? It's been mentioned 30 years ago
we earned the same wages we earn today. I think that's
the million-dollar question. It's very important.

Important. What is going to be done about salaries and
wages? I think that's where it would have to begin.

Because, yes, there is a union that represents farm
workers, but unfortunately, I don't think they have done
much because salaries remain the same. And most of us
don't have medical coverage. And I think that if you
could give us a brief response or comment on wages. Thank
SECRETARY KAWAMURA: Thank you. We are listening, and various other sessions, that these four things, the living wage where one can have protection, safety and security, health security, we're talking about transportation problems and also where one can live, and the other one that's already there, what are we going to do with the reform.

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

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

An increase in wages, that is something that -- it can arrive with this attention on agriculture in general. Many people say you can't produce it in
California, we'll buy it from China, it's cheaper. Many people say this sort of thing. That's where I am saying, we have to get together, all of us in agriculture, and begin stating that the production of -- agricultural production here in California has a value. And it has an extra value because it is produced here. There's less pollution and more attention to the environment. All of these things also must lead to a better price. And that is where I think, my opinion, where we can give more.

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

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

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

SECRETARY KAWAMURA: I apologize.

MS. FLORES: Thank you. Also, I think if we could do something to increase wages of field workers, because as I mentioned earlier, people in the field have
to work ten hours before they pay them overtime, time and
a half, whereas other workers only eight workers. I think
there's something there that needs to be done as well.

Thank you.

SECRETARY KAWAMURA: Thank you.

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

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

And in representation of other colleagues, I
would like to say thank you for allowing us to provide our
opinions, our idea, our vision for agriculture. As field
workers, I think it's an opportunity for us to express
everything that we have as a vision as -- that we have as
ag workers in California. So we want to thank you deeply
for the opportunity and the representation of all my
colleagues here, we thank you, and also at the specific
request of my colleagues, thank you.
MR. CEJA: I have a question. My question is is there some sort of a website where you can look at the progress being made or, you know, there's a lot of injustice towards workers, but they don't want to step up because they form groups, and then when it's time to go to the office, they back off and they just leave one person in front. So the fear of reporting issues. But is there a place where we can say, okay, where we anonymously file without anybody knowing, is there a particular site or place that we can do this for us to know?

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

Deputy Secretary, do you want to make a comment?

DEPUTY SECRETARY JONES: Sure.

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

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

My name is Robert Jones. I'm the Deputy Secretary for the Workforce and Development Agency, Labor and Workforce Development Agency out of Sacramento. Our
agency represents or includes within it not only the Labor
Commissioner, Cal OSHA, Workers' Compensation, but also
the Agriculture Labor Relations Board. And we have a very
keen interest in a lot of the issues that were raised here	onight.

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

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

The second thing, if you have concerns, there's
the Bureau of Field Investigation of the Labor
Commissioner that can investigate those issues. In fact,
we cooperate with CRLA and other groups on a regular
basis, especially right now where we're having all the
heat stress problems. I'm on my way to Blythe tomorrow
night. So I mean, these are all areas that we're very
interested in seeing what we can do to protect your
rights.

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

The second thing that I'm also concerned about is
the retaliation against workers who file claims. If in
fact claims are filed for wages that are due, we have an
entire agency, which is very much backlogged, but we have
an agency that the purpose of that agency is to make sure
that there isn't retaliation against workers. Of course
it raises the problem that we can't force employers to
take workers back who don't have the legal right to work.
So we can get you everything that's owed to you; the one
thing we can't do under federal law is get you reinstated.
And I'd like to see that fixed. And of course that's
something that requires action in Washington, and I cannot
possibly comment on that right now or I'll be at a hearing
someplace.
So we do want to make sure that all workers know that they have the right to file claims, that we will investigate those claims. And if you know, especially, of hazardous situations in fields, especially right now, if you know of situations where there's not proper shade, you're not allowed to take rests, and there's not clean water available to you within a close walking distance of where you're working, we need to know that immediately and we will investigate it immediately.

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

MR. HUERTA: I think that we've heard from all of us who have spoken, we've talked a lot about wages here, but I think that you would like to take an idea as to pretty much what we're talking about, why we complain so much about our wages and we all talk about wages. I want
you to take with you a more specific idea and for all of you to write down please in your notes approximately from the people who work here that work in the field, they'll back me on this. Here's a question for you, and at the same time it's an answer to what we've been talking about. When we talk about wages and we complain about wages, it's because we are making on average approximately $350 per week, maybe 400 tops; and as a question for you, do you think that that is a fair wage for us? What do you think? Is it a fair wage, $350 per week or 400, when one person earns -- when a person pays $1,200 in rent, having, you know, your spouse with you, I think $350 a week is not a fair wage for us. That is why we are here and really fight for wages. What are we going to do? You know, it's been talked about for 30 years, wages are the same as 30 years ago, but rent goes up, gas goes up, food goes up, everything. So that's what we're looking at the future, 30 more years, and we'll still be earning $300 a week or 350? That's why I wanted to express to you, and at the same time the question, do you think that 350 or $400 a week is fair for us?

MR. HERNANDEZ: Well, I think this is a really good opportunity, and I'm glad actually some of these issues have come up because the piece I wanted to share at the end of my comments was that I think this is a very
good example of mutual learning that's taking place,

learning from both the Board's perspective and learning

from the community's perspective. And the question to me

around, you know, where we are at now and where we go

forward with this California ag vision process is how do

we make sure that this vision is not only bought into by

CDFA but by also those other agencies that have

responsibilities over agriculture, such as the Department

of Labor, such as Cal EPA, and that it doesn't stay in

Sacramento but actually comes down into Ventura County and

Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo, that the ag

commissioners in each of these 52 counties that are in

California are also a part of and bought into this

collective vision that we are trying to create.

And part of these challenges is a recognition of,

you know, the self-interest of the people who are going to

be at the table. This morning I heard a lot about, you

know, from the other side, the over-regulation, right?

And so there's a lot of self-interest that needs to be

met. I think what's important to understand is that when

we talk about self-interest, it's about recognizing that

it's our needs among everyone else's and that it's not

just me or it's not just farm workers that are in need and

it's not just growers that are in need, it's that we all

have challenges that we have to face, and sometimes those
realities are really difficult.

And we don't want to have the conversations --

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

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

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

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

I should speak in English I guess.

But we're going to have another opportunity for
comments from the leaders of all the different stakeholder
groups, groups that are represented. We're also going to
present this to the Governor, and the Governor's going to
give us his opinion of what he wants to do or not.

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

But what happened is that many people working
together in the field of hunger and the field of
conservation, of the environment, and surely all the
people who grow vegetables and specialty crops and other
parts, were working. And what happened also is that we
worked with other agencies here in California, with the
Department of Labor, the resources, the people of EPA, and
we worked together, the people from health services,
working together with the support of the Governor.

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

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

(Thereupon, the July 7, 2008,
California Department of
Food and Agriculture
Vision Listening Session
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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