

# Farm groups oppose merging state agencies

## Proposed legislation would examine consolidation

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

SALEM — Legislation that would examine merging natural resource agencies in Oregon is opposed by farm and timber groups as a “solution in search of a problem.”

Under Senate Bill 24, a task force appointed by legislative leaders and the governor would “study the benefits of abolishing or consolidating” 14 state agencies charged with managing natural resources.

Aside from the possibility of saving money, consolidation could improve the state government’s efficiency in analysis and permitting, said Sen. Michael Dembrow, D-Portland.

However, the task force may decide that Oregon is better off with the current structure, Dembrow said during a Feb. 16 hearing of the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources.

The Oregon Farm Bureau is confident the agencies are already functioning smoothly

and doesn’t think it’s necessary to spend time contemplating alternatives, said Katie Fast, the group’s vice president of public policy.

Promoting agriculture is an important part of the Oregon Department of Agriculture’s mission but may get swamped by other priorities if it was merged with other agencies that are solely focused on regulation, she said.

The boards and commissions that oversee state agencies have also developed expertise that’s specific to

natural resource industries, Fast said.

These governing bodies are already asked to handle many complex issues, said Heath Curtiss, director of government affairs for the Oregon Forest Industries Council.

If boards or commissions were merged to oversee a broader regulatory sphere, their members would struggle to develop expertise and would have little choice but to defer to agency officials, he said.

It would be possible to merge natural resource agencies without eliminating department directors or commissions, but at that point the

added efficiency is questionable and consolidation may just amount to another layer of government, Curtiss said.

A larger bureaucracy is undesirable because it could encumber the resolution of regulatory questions or seek to overrule the decisions of state agencies, said Mike Freese, vice president of Associated Oregon Industries.

The committee also considered two other bills characterized as “agency consolidation light” by Richard Whitman, natural resources policy director for Gov. John Kitzhaber.

Senate Bill 201 would create “natural resources align-

ment coordinators” to work with regional teams and help agencies make regulatory decisions, while Senate Bill 203 would establish a “natural resources partnership coordinator” to find cooperation opportunities with private interests as well as other government entities.

Sen. Alan Olsen, R-Canby, asked why new positions are necessary since state agencies are already trying to coordinate with each other.

“We are doing it on an ad hoc basis and leaving opportunities on the table that we should be taking advantage of, frankly,” said Whitman.

# Obama immigration action creates pitfalls for employers

By DAN WHEAT  
Capital Press

WENATCHEE, Wash. — So you’re an employer and an employee asks for your help in applying for a work permit granted under President Obama’s controversial immigration executive actions.

By law, you should fire the employee because he just gave you “constructive knowledge” that he’s an illegal worker, said Tom Roach, a Pasco immigration attorney.

Constructive knowledge is when people know facts that indicate they should know another fact. As far as the government is concerned, constructive knowledge is as good as factual knowledge, Roach said. In this example, if the employee asks for help applying for a work permit it indicates he is in the country illegally and cannot remain employed.

Most employers will probably say they didn’t hear what the employee said and that they can’t help, he said.

But if the employee doesn’t admit he’s illegal and doesn’t say why he needs his employment records, the employer can provide them, Roach told attendees of a recent Washington Farm Labor Association labor conference in Wenatchee.

It’s even better for the em-



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Tom Roach, a Pasco, Wash., immigration attorney talks about President Obama’s executive action for illegal immigrants at the Washington Farm Labor Association’s annual meeting, in Wenatchee, on Feb. 12.

ployer if the employee simply uses his paycheck stubs as proof of employment to apply for the permit, he said.

Three years ago, under his Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, Obama gave deportation deferrals to 600,000 immigrants under age 30 if they had come to the U.S. illegally before age 15. In November, he extended that action to 300,000 more immigrants.

Obama also issued the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans for an estimated 4.5 million adults, who have illegally been in the U.S. for at least five years and who have children who are U.S. citizens.

A federal judge in Texas has issued an injunction blocking im-

plementation of that program as a lawsuit filed by 26 states claiming Obama has overstepped his authority makes its way through the courts. The administration is set to appeal the injunction.

About 90,000 to 100,000 people in Washington state qualify for DAPA, Roach said.

If the program is allowed to proceed, when people meet DAPA requirements they will be issued a temporary work permit and a Social Security card valid only with the permit. At that point, Roach said, employers could fire employees for previously lying to them about their legal status, but they don’t have to. Employers should treat everyone consistently and not single out employees they don’t like, he said.

## Judge stalls Obama’s executive action on immigration

HOUSTON (AP) — The White House promised an appeal Tuesday after a federal judge in Texas temporarily blocked President Barack Obama’s executive action on immigration and gave a coalition of 26 states time to pursue a lawsuit aiming to permanently stop the orders.

U.S. District Judge Andrew Hanen’s decision late Monday puts on hold Obama’s orders that could spare from deportation as many as 5 million people who are in the U.S. illegally.

Hanen wrote in a memorandum accompanying his order that the lawsuit should go forward. Without a preliminary injunction, he said, the states would “suffer ir-

reparable harm in this case.”

“The genie would be impossible to put back into the bottle,” he wrote, adding that he agreed that legalizing the presence of millions of people is a “virtually irreversible” action.

In a statement early Tuesday, the White House defended the executive actions issued in November as within the president’s legal authority, saying the U.S. Supreme Court and Congress have said federal officials can establish priorities in enforcing immigration laws.

“The district court’s decision wrongly prevents these lawful, commonsense policies from taking effect and the Department of Justice has indicated that it will appeal that decision,” the statement said.

It’s best to fill out new I-9 forms using the work permit as the sole document proving employment eligibility, he said.

Leon Sequeira, a Washington, D.C., labor attorney, said he’s not sure a lot of people will apply for a permit because they may not want to risk exposure to the federal government for a three-year permit if they’ve already gone undetected for many years.

Paula McKay, manager of Mar-Jon Labor, an Othello labor contractor, said most farmworkers are making more money than they were five years ago but if they obtain permits they may move on to higher-paying non-agricultural jobs.

**FENCE-FLAG® AT WORK**  
Patented • Copyright 2015  
MOM & POP PRODUCTS CO. • P.O. BOX 45 • ROME, OH 44085  
Phone & Fax (440)474-4120  
[WWW.FENCE-FLAG.COM](http://WWW.FENCE-FLAG.COM)  
Make your fence visible & safer for Livestock, Wildlife & Humans!!!

# USDA approves GM apples developed in Canada

By DAN WHEAT  
Capital Press

The USDA has deregulated two genetically modified apple varieties from British Columbia for propagation and sales in the United States.

But the company that developed the varieties, Okanagan Specialty Fruits of Summerland, B.C., may have a hard time finding growers interested in growing the apples in the U.S. because of public concern and opposition to genetically modified foods.

“We’re super excited. It’s been 57 months of waiting, so it’s very good news for us,” Neil Carter, president of Okanagan Specialty Fruits, told Capital Press.

The company’s Arctic-brand Golden Delicious and Granny Smith apples have been engineered to silence a gene that causes browning when sliced. The company is working on other varieties.

Carter believes non-browning and GM apples with other attributes could increase apple consumption and returns to growers. He says biotechnology is needed to help agriculture meet an ever-expanding global food demand.

While supportive of the science, the Washington apple industry has opposed deregulation of the GM apples because it believes it could damage apple sales.

Chris Schlect, president of the Northwest Horticultural Council in Yakima, said that’s still the case. He noted planting orchards is expensive and that growers will be unlikely to invest time and money into varieties that are controversial and risky.

Two years ago, John Rice, co-owner of Rice Fruit Co. in Gardner, Pa., the largest apple packer on the East Coast, said he wanted to plant the GM apples. Ten years earlier, he lost peach orchards to a virus that potentially could have been saved by GM rootstock had it existed.



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Neal Carter, president of Okanagan Specialty Fruits, Summerland, B.C., is shown with the Arctic Golden and Granny apples at the Washington State Horticultural Association annual meeting in Wenatchee, Wash., in 2013. The USDA has deregulated the genetically modified apples.

But now Rice no longer wants to plant GM apples.

“My position has evolved, driven by what seems to be an increasingly militant point of view adopted by consumer groups and the national media that seems to make GM foods seem like part of an evil conspiracy to make people unhealthy by selling foods more profitable to the grower,” Rice said. “That was never my idea. I’ve always looked at it as the same as breeding to improve apples for the consumer by making them more flavorful or crisp or nutritious or requiring less pesticides.”

Rice expressed admiration for Carter but said he thinks

Carter will have a hard time finding people in the U.S. willing to plant Arctic apples. He said the processing cooperative he uses — for apples for juicing, sauce and pie filling — has already said it won’t use any GM apples. He said he doubts food service distributors will want to go there either.

Carter said he sees the food service industry as a greater market for his non-browning apples than the fresh market. Arctic apples could lessen costs and boost sales of the sliced-apple snack business, he has said. But a leader in that business, Crunch Pak of Cashmere, Wash., has said

it has no intention of using them.

In deregulating Arctic apples, USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service said it found the apples are unlikely to pose a risk to plants or the human environment.

Carter said consumers can be confident in rigorous review of the apples and that the USDA found them just as safe and healthy as any other apple.

“All we’ve done is reduce the expression of a single enzyme. There are no novel proteins in Arctic fruit and its nutrition and composition is equivalent to conventional counterparts,” he said.

**Web Steel Buildings Northwest LLC**

- Garages/Shops
- Commercial
- Agricultural
- Industrial

503-668-7211 • 855-668-7211  
[www.WSBNW.com](http://www.WSBNW.com) • Sandy, OR  
**BUY FACTORY DIRECT & SAVE!**

**DURABILITY REDEFINED.**

Introducing Vermeer N-series balers – the newest models in the flagship line from the company that started it all. Heavy-duty components provide superior strength and durability. Smart features like the available automatic pickup clutch and auto lube system further extend machine life. Plus, they’re backed by the best distribution network in the industry. Vermeer 604N/605N balers are here to stay.

**Vermeer**  
EQUIPPED TO DO MORE.

<b>OREGON REDMOND</b> Midstate Power Products	541-548-6744
<b>SILVERTON</b> Linn Benton Tractor Co.	503-873-5355
<b>TANGENT</b> Linn Benton Tractor Co.	541-926-1811

<b>WASHINGTON COLVILLE</b> LaDuke & Fogle Equipment Inc.	509-684-2575
<b>LYNDEN</b> Roger Bajema Farm Equipment	360-354-4546
<b>VALLEYFORD</b> Emtman Equipment	509-448-8337