

Washington

Washington FFA chooses its national candidate

**State adviser:
Process is 'intense'**

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

Washington FFA leaders are sending last year's state president to the organization's fall convention in hopes that he will be chosen a national officer.

Apolinar Blanco of Chelan, Wash., will represent the state at the FFA nationals, held each October.

"To me, it means an opportunity that not a lot of people get the chance to

take," Blanco said. "It's humbling, prideful, joyful, but at the same time, it means more than I ever imagined."

He was the 2013-14 Chelan chapter president, and the 2014-15 Washington state FFA president.

Blanco has been attending Walla Walla Community College and hopes to be an agriculture teacher and FFA adviser. He hopes to represent the diversity of the state's agriculture industry and members.

"Apol is a hard worker with a service heart," said Abbie DeMeerleer, Washington FFA executive director. "He

connects well with students, understands the diversity of agriculture in Washington and has a passion for advancing FFA. He also understands the responsibilities that come with potentially becoming a national officer and is willing to give up a year of college in service to FFA if elected."

National officer candidates go through a nearly yearlong selection process, Washington FFA adviser Rebecca Wallace said. It includes a knowledge test, a writing test, group and one-on-one interviews, workshop facilitation and duties at the state convention in May.

"It's definitely on the proposed candidate's side to be a self-starter," she said. "Back at the national level, the process the candidates go through is intense."

Blanco was the only applicant from Washington.

"We're always proud of our candidates, regardless of if they're elected or not," she said.

Washington's national candidate last year, Rebecca Foote, made it to the final round of the selection process, the farthest a candidate from Washington has progressed in several years, DeMeerleer said.

Most states usually select a candidate for national officer each year, Wallace said.

Oregon FFA Executive Secretary Lee Letsch said her state will make a decision in April.

Idaho FFA adviser Glenn Orthel said his state usually selects a candidate after the state convention in April.

California FFA adviser Josiah Mayfield said his state usually selects a candidate in June.

Washington typically selects its candidate at the state convention in May, but Wallace said the FFA board decided to do it early this year.



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press
Apolinar Blanco delivers his retirement address May 16, 2015, after a year as Washington FFA's president. Blanco will represent the state as a candidate for national officer in October at the nationals in Indianapolis, Ind.

Washington AG cites farm labor in immigration brief to Supreme Court

Ferguson: Order helps agriculture

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson on Tuesday continued to be the lead spokesman for states seeking to uphold President Barack Obama's immigration orders, as his office filed a brief with the U.S. Supreme Court

arguing that undocumented immigrants hold low-skilled farm jobs that would otherwise go unfilled.

"Immigrant workers in low-skilled jobs benefit the economy by lowering the cost of living, with negligible impacts on low-skill native workers," according to the brief.

The Supreme Court will hear oral arguments April 18 on whether Obama acted lawfully in 2014 when he suspended the deportation of some 4.4 million illegal immigrants.

The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has issued an injunction blocking the president's orders.

While Texas has taken the lead among 25 states challenging the immigration orders, Washington has supplied

the written arguments for the 16 states and the District of Columbia that are backing the president.

Washington's filing Tuesday reprises arguments the state has made in earlier briefs, though the state had not previously singled out agricultural workers.

Obama's immigration orders will expand the pool of workers at the "upper and lower ends of the scale of worker skill level," according to the brief.

"At the (lower) end of the scale, immigrants play a crucial role in filling the demand for low-skilled work in a range of fields, especially in agricultural positions that would otherwise go unfilled," according to the brief.

The brief also argues that legalizing the undocumented immigrants, including an estimated 105,000 in Washington, will keep families together and create new taxpayers.

"Each day that these reforms are delayed harms Washingtonians who seek to emerge from the shadows and live and work legally to support their families," Ferguson said in a written statement issued Wednesday.

Ferguson's brief accused Texas and other states of trying to "achieve a political goal that they could not achieve through democratic means."

In its written arguments, the Texas Attorney General's Office claims that Obama has

failed to faithfully execute the law.

"The executive claims the power to ignore the statutes and unilaterally deem lawful the presence of any unauthorized alien it chooses not to remove," according to a brief Texas filed with the Supreme Court.

Texas claims that it was directly harmed by the president's directives because it will have to bear the cost of issuing driver licenses to as many as 500,000 newly legalized residents. The state subsidy is more than \$100 per license, according to court records.

Ferguson argues that states are still free to deny driver licenses to whomever they wish.

If Obama's immigration orders are blocked, millions of people will be prevented from "receiving the substantial economic, social welfare and public safety benefits that will flow" from the president's actions, according to Ferguson's brief.

California and Oregon are also among the states supporting Obama's actions.

Idaho is among the states seeking to block the president's immigration programs.

One program would allow illegal immigrants with children who have legal status to apply for lawful standing. The other would offer legal standing to children 16 and younger who entered the country illegally.

Hemp bill among legislation vetoed by Inslee

No budget to sign, so out comes veto pen

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — Legislation to legalize hemp farming was among a batch of bills Gov. Jay Inslee vetoed last week to punish lawmakers for not passing a budget before the regular session ended.

The setback for hemp advocates may only be temporary. The Legislature can re-pass the bill during the 30-day session that began March 11.

All told, Inslee vetoed 27 of the 37 bills legislators sent him during the just-concluded 60-day session.

"Given legislators' inability to complete their number one job, I measured these bills against the importance of the budget and set a very high bar," Inslee said in a written statement.

"I recognize this is perhaps the largest single batch of vetoes in history. None of these vetoed bills were as important as the fundamental responsibility of passing a budget. I continue to hope legislators



Don Jenkins/Capital Press
Washington Gov. Jay Inslee, shown here in a 2015 file photo, says lawmakers' failure to deliver a budget during the just-concluded regular session drove him to veto 27 bills, including one to legalize hemp farming.

will focus on negotiations and reach agreement as quickly as possible."

In a boilerplate veto message, Inslee said the hemp legislation was a "worthy bill," but not more important than the budget. "Until a budget agreement is reached, I cannot support this bill."

In a tartly worded email to members, the Washington Farm Bureau scolded Inslee for an "overstepped power play" and for failing to fulfill the governor's role of being

the "grownup in the room."

"Our current governor continues to show an uncanny ability to drive a wedge between his office and legislators," according to the Farm Bureau.

The Farm Bureau took a poke at Inslee's passion for cutting carbon to curb climate change. The Farm Bureau said all the fuel, electricity and "hot air" invested in passing the 27 bills were "wasted by the stroke of a pen."

Section of Roza canal gets facelift

By **DAN WHEAT**
Capital Press

MOXEE, Wash. — A little more than a mile of the Roza Irrigation District canal near Moxee has been cleaned and cracks sandblasted and sealed in preparation for the start of the irrigation season, March 15.

Prep started a month ago and \$375,000 worth of sealant work is being done by Matheson Painting Contractors of Pasco. The state provided \$350,000 as part of the conservation element of the Yakima Basin Integrated Water Resource Management Plan and \$25,000 came from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation which manages irrigation diversions on the Yakima River.

The RID canal flows 95 miles from Roza Dam, north of Selah, to Benton City. Of the total, 25 miles are concrete-lined, dating back to the 1940s and 1950s. A couple more miles are concrete-lined tunnels and siphons and there's about a mile that's lined with a plastic, rubberized fabric, said Scott Revell, RID manager in Sunnyside.

The remaining 67 miles of the canal is earthen. Seepage occurs but is lessened by fast flowing water creating a hard pan of silt on the canal bottom.

Cracks in six of the 25 miles lined with concrete have been repaired since 2006. The intent is to conserve water. Revell is pursuing more grants for \$5 million to \$6 million worth of sealant work in coming years.



Courtesy/Roza Irrigation District
Sealed cracks are on the sidewall and sandblasted cracks are ready for sealing on the bottom of the Roza Irrigation District canal

More than half of the 25 miles of concrete-lined canal is in the Moxee area from Terrace Heights to Konnowoc Pass. There are portions near Sunnyside, Prosser and Benton City.

Beside the sealant work, the RID has been repairing parts of the concrete liner that have buckled over time from heat of the sun. Some of that damage was caused during last year's May 11 to 31 shutdown and dewatering of the canal to conserve water during the drought.

Seventeen expansion joints to lessen buckling have been installed in the canal this winter and that many or more will be installed the next two winters, Revell said.

Revell is eager for winter work to be finished and said

he's "nervous" about the upcoming irrigation season. It's too early to know, he said, if there will be any water restrictions similar to last year.

That's when the district cut water to farmers by up to 75 percent and did the May shutdown. The district and other junior water right holders in the Yakima Basin received 47 percent of their normal supply due to the drought caused by light mountain snowpack. Crop losses in millions of dollars resulted.

So far this season, the state's water supply specialist is warning that little mountain snowfall in the past month and higher than normal temperatures are accelerating snowpack melt by a month.



Oregon Aglink

Take a new look at an old friend.



Pamela Lucht
Oregon Aglink Board Member

Pamela, along with her husband Neal and now their daughter Lauren, own Northwest Transplants, a 28-year-old business located in Molalla, Oregon. NWT is a transplant seedling nursery growing crops of all kinds on contract for their commercial farm customers. Their family operation now produces over 80 million seedlings and services five Northwestern States and Western Canada.

Pamela, once a city girl, and a transplant to agriculture herself, believes the Oregon Ag Link team is doing good things for Agricultural Education. She and her family are passionate about Ag Education at all levels, including AgLink Adopt a Farmer Program. "I am proud that our company jumped at the opportunity to be one of the adopted farms. It's fun and exciting to watch students from all backgrounds make a connection with our small piece of agriculture." She believes exposing students to hands-on experiences about where their food comes from is one of our best ways to develop agricultural literacy.

As an Oregon Aglink board member, Pamela believes in Oregon Aglink's message that agriculture is rooted, green and vital. It's important to Pamela that Oregonians understand the critical role that agriculture plays in our economy. Aglink's Adopt a Farmer program, the Road Crop Identification Signs and the "I am Oregon Agriculture" TV ads are ways that Aglink is making this difference.

Become a member today!

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