

# Legislative deadlines won't apply to Oregon ag overtime bill

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

SALEM — The debate over whether Oregon farmworkers should be paid higher overtime wages may last until the end of the legislative session.

House Bill 2358, which would end the agricultural overtime exemption, has been moved to the House Rules Committee, where it won't be subject to legislative deadlines that cull legislative proposals at various stages in the session.

The legislative session must adjourn by June 27.

The House Committee on Business and Labor has voted 7-4 to make the referral without recommendation as to the bill's approval.

Rep. Paul Holvey, D-Eugene, said it's "imperative" to move forward on the issue during the 2021 legislative session and that it was "advantageous to both sides for the conversation to continue."

"I worry about the consequences of inaction, at this point," he said.

All four Republicans on the committee voted against moving the bill.

The matter is "complex" and will require "significant invest-



Andrea Johnson

**Workers harvest Oregon winegrapes in this file photo. A bill that would end the Oregon agriculture industry's exemption from higher overtime wages won't face legislative deadlines this session.**

ment" by all sides to arrive at a potential solution, said Rep. Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles.

Bonham said the discussion over the bill belongs in the House Committee on Business and Labor and he'd prefer if a workgroup came up with another proposal for a future legislative session.

"I think there's too much to consider to think we can get through this in the next two months," Bonham said.

Rep. Janelle Bynum, D-Clackamas, said that agricultural over-

time is a "human rights issue" on which "the optics are horrible," adding that lawmakers should make progress "sooner than later."

"Just because someone said they can't take something economically doesn't mean they're not there from a human rights perspective," Bynum said. "But we have to get there from the human rights perspective as well as the economic perspective. This absolutely needs to move forth. How and when are the major questions."

# WSDA seeks invasive hornet quarantine, power to attack nests

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

The Washington State Department of Agriculture plans to prohibit trafficking in live hornets, a quarantine inspired by Asian giant hornets and other invasive hornets that eat fruit and kill pollinators.

The department says it's unaware that any business imports live hornets, but hornets are bred elsewhere in the world and served as a delicacy or sold as a health supplement.

"It would be a problem if somebody did try to do it," department spokeswoman Karla Salp said Tuesday. "A quarantine would give us a tool to stop it."

Washington has no native hornets of the genus *Vespa*. The commonly found bald-faced hornet belongs to the family *Vespidae*, related to the yellowjacket and not a true hornet.

The Asian giant hornets seen in Whatcom County beginning in late 2019 are related to several hornets that would be a problem for farmers if they gained a foothold in Washington, according to the department.

Under a quarantine, researchers could get state permits to work on live hornets. Otherwise, transporting or receiving a live hornet in the state would be forbidden.

Along with a quarantine, the department plans to adopt a rule

allowing it to go onto private property and eradicate invasive hornet nests. Until the hornets are gone, the department would enforce a restricted zone within 20 meters — about 65 feet — of the nest.

The department received permission last fall from a landowner to vacuum Asian giant hornets from a tree cavity. Four days later, the department hauled away the tree and later found more hornets inside.

"This will make it explicitly clear that we have the authority to go in and deal with an infestation," Salp said.

Salp said the department won't force people from their homes, though it does hope to prevent nests from becoming tourist attractions.

Weather, obstacles and equipment availability could delay assaulting the nest, though the department anticipates eradication and clean up would take no more than two weeks.

Businesses may have to close as the department restricts the area, though the department hopes merchants would be grateful for nests gone. The department would pay for removal.

Hornets, even those smaller than Asian giant hornets, are harmful to humans, according to the department. The venom can be toxic. Unlike bees, hornets can repeatedly sting.

# \$1.25 million in chlorpyrifos alternatives funding clears initial Oregon hurdle

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

With chlorpyrifos insecticides coming under new restrictions in Oregon, the farm industry is pushing for increased research into alternative products and methods.

A bill that would direct \$1.25 million toward those studies recently cleared an important initial hurdle, with the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee unanimously recommending approval.

Under House Bill 3249, the state's Department of Agriculture would receive \$800,000 to establish a grant program for chlorpyrifos alternatives research, while Oregon State University

would get \$400,000 to conduct field trials of replacement pesticides.

The proposal will now be considered by the Joint Committee on Ways and Means, which makes budget decisions.

Most uses of chlorpyrifos will be phased out over three years under an ODA rule enacted last year in response to concerns over the chemical's neurological impacts on humans. However, growers of numerous specialty crops still rely on the chemical for pest control.

"Without effective alternatives, farm and ranch families face crop losses and could even lose access to domestic and international markets," said Rep. Shelly Boshart-Davis, R-Albany,



Associated Press File

**A bill that would direct \$1.25 million for research into alternatives to chlorpyrifos insecticides has cleared an initial hurdle in Oregon.**

the bill's chief sponsor.

Research, field trials and federal registration of alternative pesticides are expected to take up to seven years per crop, so the studies need to begin as soon as pos-

sible, she said. Roger Beyer, director of the Oregon Seed Council.

Other crop sectors are also likely to experience serious impacts from restrictions on the insecticide, said Katie Murray, executive director of the Oregonians for Food and Shelter agribusiness group.

Mint producers are estimated to spend about \$1.5 million to \$3 million in replacement costs, which doesn't even account for reduced crop yields, she said.

In strawberry fields infested with symphylans — soil-dwelling pests — the yield losses are expected to be total due to a lack of alternatives, resulting in losses of more than \$4 million to

farmers, Murray said.

"We're leaving our growers at a disadvantage when these restrictions are inconsistent with federal regulation," she said.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency had planned to stop the use of chlorpyrifos under the Obama administration but then reversed course when the Trump administration came into office in 2017.

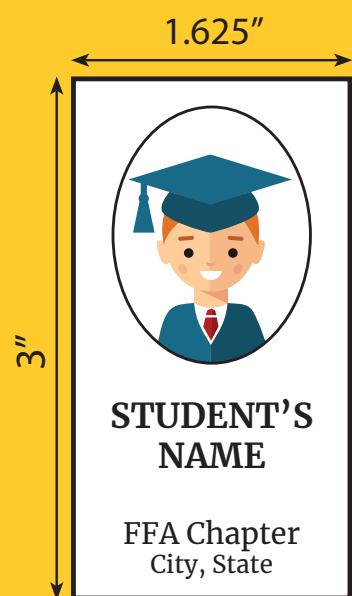
The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ordered the Environmental Protection Agency to ban the insecticide in 2018 but reconsidered that decision the following year. Last year, the agency decided to continue allowing chlorpyrifos use on an interim basis.

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