



# Santa Barbara County Farm Bureau

Affiliated with the California Farm Bureau Federation and the American Farm Bureau Federation

August 9, 2021

The Honorable Assemblyman Steve Bennett  
California State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 94248

Dear Assemblyman Bennett,

Re: OPPOSE AB 616

The California Senate is considering AB 616 (Stone), legislation that will strip agricultural employees of the right to a secret ballot election supervised by the Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB) to decide the very important question of union representation for those employees.

California law has long protected the right of agricultural employees to a secret ballot election supervised by the ALRB and free of intimidation and influence by any interested party. California has also led the way to enfranchising all Californians by expanding availability of mail-in balloting for political elections.

This stands in stark contrast with the “ballot card election” process envisioned by AB 616.

Union organizers will collect and count ballot cards and submit them along with a petition for a ballot card election. AB 616 proponents claim the bill is an attempt to allow agricultural employees to vote by mail as voters can do in political elections. The sole similarity to mail-in political elections in AB 616 is that ballot cards will be provided to the ALRB in individual envelopes. Unlike mail-in political elections, ballot cards will be provided to the ALRB directly by the union.

Under AB 616, union organizers aren't required to allow every employee to participate as all employees are guaranteed the right to participate in an ALRB-supervised secret ballot election, or as registered voters are permitted to participate in a mail-in ballot political election. And unlike traditional secret-ballot ALRB-supervised elections, employees can vote only for the union seeking the ballot card election – there is no option to vote for a different union or for no union representation.

This process is a thinly disguised version of “card check” proposals like that vetoed by former Governor Brown in 2011, who was an early advocate of the Agricultural Labor Relations Act and a strong defender of agricultural employees' right to a secret ballot election.

It is for these reasons that we are asking you to please oppose AB 616.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sheldon Bosio'.

Sheldon Bosio  
President