

Statement of Senator Dianne Feinstein on her decision not to offer AgJOBS as an amendment to the Farm Bill

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Washington, DC - U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today announced that she will not offer a measure to create a stable, reliable agricultural work force - known as AgJOBS - on the farm bill under consideration this week by the Senate.

The following is the text of her statement:

"I had every intention of offering legislation to create a stable reliable agricultural worker program - known as AgJOBS - as an amendment on the farm bill. This is something I've been working on for a long time now.

Our allies in agriculture - growers, farmers, and labor - have been rallying the troops. We've been lobbying members and counting votes. And we were prepared to fight the good fight.

When we started this effort, we knew it was an uphill battle because immigration reform is such a hot button issue. But we knew that it was critical for the U.S. agriculture industry to pass this bill, and we knew that a majority of Members in the Senate supports AgJOBS.

Why is this so important? Because without it, we will continue to see labor shortages far into the future. Fruit will rot. Crops will go unharvested. Operations will be forced to cut back or move to Mexico. And U.S. agriculture will lose market share to growers abroad - in China, in South America, in Europe.

We know that we can win this. A broad bipartisan coalition of members believe AgJOBS is a necessary solution to the crisis being faced by the agricultural industry. But in this session, unfortunately, you need more than broad support - you need the right time and opportunity to line up as well.

So when we took a clear-eyed assessment of the politics of the Farm bill and the defeat of the DREAM Act and comprehensive immigration reform, it became clear that our support could not sustain these competing forces.

Unfortunately, many of our supporters believe they cannot support AgJOBS on the Farm bill. So after numerous meetings and discussions, we have decided not to endanger the broad support for AgJOBS by taking a non-representative vote on the Farm bill.

But this fight is not over. We will be seeking time for this bill on the Senate floor - perhaps this winter or early next year.

I am writing to Majority Leader Harry Reid and asking for floor time designated for the consideration of AgJOBS.

And if there is another legislative vehicle that is a viable option, we won't hesitate to move AgJOBS as an amendment. And if any immigration amendment is offered to the Farm Bill, I will not hesitate to offer AgJOBS as a second degree amendment.

Bottom line: I am committed to moving AgJOBS in whatever way that I can this year. We will not give up the fight."

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