



Farm Labor Organizing Committee, AFL-CIO
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LABOR JUSTICE FOR FARMWORKERS



"No Trespassing" sign at entrance to a farm labor camp

FLOC is one of the original sponsors of a call to reform to include farmworkers in national labor legislation. (See [Farm Workers' Rights, 70 Years Overdue](#), *New York Times* editorial, April 5 2009.)

Farm workers have been excluded from every major labor law in the U.S. since the National Labor Relations Act was enacted in 1935 to gave workers the basic right to labor organizing and collective bargaining. At that time, most of the farm workers in the Deep South were Blacks, and the Dixiecrats that controlled Congress would never see blacks on an equal field as their counterparts in other industries. Every reform that's been debated since has excluded farm workers. FLOC strongly supports labor reforms like the Employee Free Choice Act, but we note that this also excludes farm workers.

We want a law that speaks to our unique situation. The form of such a law needs to be thoroughly debated and developed. There are questions about including farmworkers under the NLRA. Unlike other industries, agricultural production is seasonal, and, for example, it is impractical to apply National Labor Relations Board to review and conduct union elections during a 6-week cucumber harvest. The same problem exists for investigation of an unfair labor practice complaint during harvest season. Regulations that allow for the special circumstances of farm labor are needed.

The historical discrimination and measuring agricultural workers on a different standard is a debate that must finally be waged. We must not continue to stand back, wring our hands over what the opposition might do, and end up doing nothing. The fear that the opposition might take this to push a law that is worse than nothing, similar to what they did in Arizona, is understandable. This is not a provincial debate, but rather a national dialogue that will play differently in Brooklyn and Chicago than in Yuma. If we don't have this debate, we will continue to languish with complaint-driven rules that workers turn to as a last resort, and are not practical on a daily basis.

What we really need is a vehicle that we can use to deal with the work problems we face when we get out of bed in the morning. Labor rights, freedom of association, and the right to form unions get a lot of lip service. Now for the first time in American history we must push for these rights with a vigorous national campaign.

As president of a major farm worker union, **I ask you to follow us into this national debate.** To sign on as a sponsor of this call for national labor legislation for farmworkers, **write:**

laborjustice2009@hotmail.com

- * Provide your **name, title or organization, city/state/ZIP**, and
 - * Indicate that you support this initiative because of your experience with **FLOC**.
- Please **copy us** at info@floc.com.

Hasta La Victoria!

Baldemar Velásquez
President
Farm Labor Organizing Committee, AFL-CIO