After a 32-day short session, the Oregon State Legislature officially adjourned on March 3. This session was incredibly divisive, further accentuating the urban/rural divide.

“Over a mere five weeks, the legislature passed complex policies that will change how businesses operate in Oregon,” said OFB Public Policy Director Jenny Dresler. “The Democratic majority rushed to pass its priorities, and members of the Republican minority had few tools at their disposal to stop the slew of new mandates raining down on small businesses. Oregon’s farm and ranch families will bear the burden of many of these mandates, including an increased minimum wage and a new renewable energy requirement.”

OFB thanks the many Farm Bureau members who gave written or oral testimony on bills, contacted lawmakers, visited the capitol, and responded to emailed OFB Action Alerts. (Sign up for Action Alerts at oregonfb.org/advocacy or by emailing annemarie@oregonfb.org.)

Below is a summary of bills Farm Bureau followed this session, including final action by the state legislature.

LABOR

• **SB 1532: Minimum wage increase**
  Passed within the first three weeks of session, SB 1532 increases Oregon’s minimum wage over six years. The bill establishes three tiers of wages based on arbitrary geographic boundaries and requires a wage increase as early as July 2016. The wage tiers are divided as follows:
  • Tier 1: Portland UGB wage will increase to $14.75 per hour by 2022.
  • Tier 2 (urban counties): Benton, Clackamas, Clatsop, Columbia, Deschutes, Hood River, Jackson, Josephine, Lane, Lincoln, Linn, Marion, Multnomah, Polk, Tillamook, Wasco, Washington, and Yamhill Counties will increase to $13.50 per hour by 2022.
  • Tier 3 (non-urban counties): Baker, Coos, Crook, Curry, Douglas, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Jefferson, Klamath, Lake, Malheur, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, and Wheeler Counties will increase to $12.50 by 2022.

  All wages will be indexed to the CPI in 2023, and the first wage increase occurs in July of this year! SB 1532-A also includes an emergency clause, which prevents a referral by the voters. **OFB opposed, bill passed.**

• **SB 1581/ HB 4139: Paid sick leave fixes**
  Farm Bureau supported SB 1581 and HB 4139, which would have provided necessary clarity to agricultural employers relating to the state’s paid sick leave mandate. SB 1581 would also have altered the employee threshold to align the bill with the federal Family & Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and Oregon Family Leave Act (OFLA). These bills died in committee within the first weeks of session without receiving a public hearing.

  Despite these bills dying, Farm Bureau and other employer groups presented our concerns with the law in an informational hearing in front of the Senate Workforce & General Government Committee in the third week of session. During this hearing, the Bureau of Labor & Industries (BOLI) committed to reopen the rules to clarify several provisions of the law. Farm Bureau will keep working on this issue in the interim to make this mandate workable for ag employers. **OFB supported, bill died.**
ENERGY

- **SB 1547/ HB 4036: Coal-to-clean mandate**
  HB 4036 requires large utilities to eliminate coal-derived electricity from their electric portfolio and invest in a new renewable energy infrastructure. Farm Bureau opposed this legislation because consumers would be on the hook to pay for the new infrastructure requirements. HB 4036 was stalled in the Senate due to procedural issues, and the concept was amended into SB 1547. OFB opposed, SB 1547 passed.

- **SB 1574: Cap-and-trade**
  SB 1574 would have created a state cap-and-trade system for carbon emissions. Farm Bureau opposed this legislation, which would result in increased operation costs down the supply chain. OFB opposed, bill died.

WATER

- **HB 4125: Well testing**
  HB 4125 would have required landlords to test annually for nitrates, arsenic, and coliform if they rent out residential properties utilizing well water. The testing results would be given to the Oregon Health Authority, which would then submit the information to the Dept. of Environmental Quality (DEQ) for analysis. Farm Bureau opposed this legislation, which would increase costs for farmer landlords. OFB opposed, bill died.

- **HB 4113: Drought task force**
  HB 4113 establishes a Task Force on Drought Emergency Response to evaluate potential tools to prepare for problems arising from a drought emergency. OFB neutral, bill passed.

- **SB 5701: Harney County groundwater**
  OFB helped the Oregon Water Resources Dept. secure $705,288 in funding to conduct a groundwater study in Harney County. Due to concerns over water availability, the department stopped issuing permits in the Harney Basin. Long-term planning and management of the basin’s water resources cannot move forward without a better understanding of available groundwater, which is why a study is necessary. OFB supported, bill passed.

AG PRODUCTION

- **HB 4041: Seed preemption**
  This legislation would have undermined the seed preemption law. OFB opposed, bill died.

- **HB 4122: GE labeling**
  HB 4122 was amended in the House to require genetically engineered (GE) salmon sold in Oregon to be labeled as such, creating a precedent for the state-by-state labeling of GE foods. Farm Bureau opposed this bill and supports a voluntary, uniform federal label for food products that does not put producers in individual states at a competitive disadvantage. OFB opposed, bill died.

- **HB 4060: Industrial hemp**
  Farm Bureau supported HB 4060, which modifies provisions of Oregon Dept. of Agriculture’s hemp license to give farmers the ability to adapt to dynamic markets for hemp seed, flower, and fiber, as well as promote voluntary coexistence. OFB supported, bill passed.

- **SB 1598: Cannabis**
  SB 1598 made medical marijuana a crop for purposes of regulation and Right to Farm protection. Farm Bureau supported this provision, which ensures that both medical and recreational growers are following the same laws as other Oregon farmers, including water rights, water quality, pesticide laws, and others. SB 1598 also seeks to resolve a conflict created by HB 3400 in the 2015 session regarding Right to Farm protection and local regulation. The bill clarifies that while marijuana is covered under Oregon’s Right to Farm protections, the legislature intends to allow for reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions by local governments on marijuana production. Farm Bureau worked to ensure that the legislative intent was clear around this provision so that it does not impact other crops and commodities in Oregon. OFB supported, bill passed.
HB 4066: Drones
HB 4066 limits the use of drones by public agencies to conduct surveillance over private property. It also creates protections for the commercial use of drones by landowners operating drones over their own property. Farm Bureau supported the provisions of this bill that provided landowner protections while limiting governmental use of drones. **OFB supported, bill passed.**

WILDLIFE

• **HB 4040: Wolf delisting**
HB 4040 ratifies the Oregon Fish & Wildlife Commission’s decision to delist the gray wolf from the Oregon Endangered Species Act. Delisting gives the state greater freedom in actively managing wolves; however, wolf management will still be governed by the state Wolf Plan. Farm Bureau joined Oregon Cattlemen’s Assn. in support of HB 4040, which confirms commitments made by stakeholders under the Oregon Wolf Plan. **OFB supported, bill passed.**

LAND USE

• **SB 1517: Wetlands pilot project**
Part of a broader wetlands package brought forward by OFB and Oregon Dairy Farmers’ Assn., SB 1517 creates a pilot program that gives Tillamook County greater input into the design of wetlands projects adjacent to Exclusive Farm Use lands. Farm Bureau strongly supported SB 1517, which will give Tillamook County dairy farmers a greater voice in addressing the impacts of wetland construction in the county. **OFB supported, bill passed.**

• **HB 4079: Affordable housing**
Affordable housing was a priority for the Speaker of the House this session. HB 4079 directs the Land Conservation & Development Commission to establish a pilot program for local governments to site and develop affordable housing without utilizing the normal expansion process for urban growth boundaries (UGB). Local governments may not use provisions of the bill to bring high-value farmland within their UGB. Farm Bureau opposed this legislation, which circumvents Oregon’s land use planning system. **OFB opposed, bill passed.**

• **SB 1573: Annexation**
Farm Bureau opposed SB 1573, which eliminates voter approval in annexation. **OFB opposed, bill passed.**

SECOND AMENDMENT

• **SB 1551: Mental health reporters**
SB 1551 would have created a list of “reporters” that can confidentially inform the State Police of persons they believe to be mentally unstable, and therefore unfit to purchase a firearm. The police would then create a temporary hold on that person’s ability to purchase a firearm. **OFB opposed, bill died.**

• **HB 4147: Background check extension**
As originally introduced, HB 4147 would have prohibited the sale of a firearm for 10 business days if the State Police is unable to determine whether the recipient is qualified to purchase a firearm. **OFB opposed, bill died.**

A great mix of legislators, farmers, and small business owners descended upon the state capitol on Feb. 8 to let lawmakers know that increasing the minimum wage — along with other laws and bills that drastically increase costs for employers — will be devastating to family businesses. Reps. Mike McLane and Jodi Hack gave rousing speeches before the group took to the halls of the capitol.

Pic on right: Anna Scharf of Polk County Farm Bureau was one of many Farm Bureau members active in opposing the minimum wage increase.