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**AGRICULTURE COALITION LAUNCHED TO FIGHT
EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE ACT (EFCA)**

Irvine, Calif., (February 17, 2009) – Today, a new coalition of national, regional and local agricultural associations covering virtually every sector of the industry launched a campaign to oppose the proposed Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) also known as the “card check” bill. Led by co-chairs Western Growers, the California Farm Bureau and the California Grape and Tree Fruit League, Agriculture for a Democratic Workplace (ADW) unveiled its Web site (www.coalitionforagriculture.org) with information and tools coalition members may use to contact legislators and voice their opposition to the EFCA.

Labor is making the EFCA a top priority in Congress this year. The EFCA would radically alter 75 years of labor law governing the rights of employees by, among other things, effectively eliminating NLRB-supervised secret ballot elections in favor of “card check,” thereby enabling unions to organize employees merely by convincing or coercing a majority of them to sign cards.

Along with national partners like the Coalition for a Democratic Workplace, ADW intends to let the nation's leaders know that agricultural workers, employers, associations and organizations will fight to protect the right to a federally supervised secret ballot when workers are deciding whether or not to join a union.

"These are tenuous economic times," says Tom Nassif, President and CEO of Western Growers. "We need to make small businesses, including domestic family farms, more competitive and incentivize the growth of new business which will encourage job creation. Passage of the EFCA will result in just the opposite."

Agriculture for a Democratic Workplace (ADW) has its roots in California where a broad coalition of agricultural associations helped defeat similar measures at the state level in 2008 and 2007. The proposed "card-check" system invites intimidation and coercion in the organizing process by eliminating the privacy and anonymity that are cornerstones of America's free election process and granted to employees under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). While agricultural field workers are not subject to the provisions of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) workers in agricultural jobs in packing plants, processing plants, cooling facilities, transportation, and many other off-the-farm worksites do fall under the protections of the NLRA and would be subject to the EFCA. Farmers anticipate that the costs of uncompetitive union contracts for workers beyond the farm will translate into lower prices offered for their crops.

The EFCA would also mandate binding arbitration if agreement on a contract cannot be reached, where a third party will make the labor contract decisions for both the employer and employees. Companies that are not able to operate under contracts may be forced to reduce worker benefits, reduce their workforce to remain in business, or worse, close their doors and move offshore.

"Workers currently have a right to a secret ballot," said Nassif. "Employers currently have a right to state their case to the employees. Why are we taking these rights away when they're fair and logical?"

For more information, access: www.coalitionforagriculture.org or contact Paul Simonds (psimonds@coalitionforagriculture.com) at (949) 885-2257 or Wendy Fink-Weber (wfweber@coalitionforagriculture.com) at (949) 885-2256.

Coalition members include:

American Mushroom Institute
Arizona Cattle Feeder's Association
California Association of Winegrape Growers

California Canning Peach Association
California Citrus Mutual
California Dairies, Inc
California Farm Bureau Federation
California Grain & Feed Association
California Grape & Tree Fruit League
California Association of Nurseries & Garden Centers
California Poultry Federation
Family Winemakers of California
Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association
Grower-Shipper Assoc. of Central California
Grower-Shipper Vegetable Association of Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties
Imperial Valley Vegetable Growers Association
American Nursery and Landscape Association
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Chicken Council National Council of Agricultural Employers
National Milk Producers Federation
National Potato Council
Northwest Horticultural Council
Produce Marketing Association
Raisin Bargaining Association
Society of American Florists
Texas Produce Association
United Fresh Produce Association
U.S. Apple Association
Ventura County Agricultural Association
Wenatchee Valley Traffic Association
Western Growers
Western United Dairymen
Wine Institute
Yakima Valley Growers-Shippers Association

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