

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 12, 2010

The Honorable Hilda L. Solis
Secretary of Labor
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Madam Secretary:

I write today to encourage you and your staff in Washington State to ensure that the Department of Labor (DOL) is making every possible effort to have an open dialogue with farmers who are subject to the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act (MSAWPA). It is important for both farmers and their seasonal and migrant employees that the requirements of the Act are clearly articulated. This is why we believe it should be the DOL's goal to work with all stakeholders to ensure compliance, whether it comes through education or enforcement.

Over the last several years DOL's Wage and Hour Division has conducted enforcement inspections under MSAWPA in many areas of Washington State, including the Skagit Valley, Okanogan County and most recently the Columbia Basin. While it is perfectly reasonable for the DOL to allocate resources for inspections, especially if there is evidence of MSAWPA violations, we also expect a more robust effort to work proactively with farmers, providing them the tools and information they need to comply with MSAWPA before enforcement actions. Inspections every five or ten years cannot be the only tool used to ensure compliance; outreach and education must also be part of the equation.

We strongly encourage you to make every effort possible to ensure that the DOL's enforcement of the MSAWPA is carried out with as much cooperation and transparency as possible.

Sincerely,








