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## LABOR ADVISORY APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO UNION ORGANIZING

### Background

The United Farm Workers have begun a campaign in the Columbia Basin and lower Yakima Valley. The first target was Ruby Ridge Dairy in Pasco, where a union organizing campaign is underway.

Union organizing can begin as soon as a union organizer is hired as your employee. The organizer will ask workers to sign a petition calling for union representation – without a secret ballot election. Washington Farm Bureau policy recognizes the right of workers to unionize after a secret ballot election. In the case of Ruby Ridge, a majority of workers do not want a union, and the UFW will not agree to a secret ballot election.

Union organizers can target any employer, but the risk increases if you have poor working conditions – dirty bathrooms, inflexible management style, and supervisors with poor communications skills. The union will exploit workers' frustration, and convince these workers that by joining a union the worker can level the playing field. They will not tell workers that they must pay union dues and abide by union work rules.

Managers should be aware of suspicious meetings and other common danger signals. They should not ask workers if there is a union organizing effort. Discouraging workers from signing a union petition may not be legal and cannot be tolerated. Managers should never spy on workers or argue with a worker who makes pro-union statements – simply take note and report it to management. Supervisors should treat all workers fairly and never discriminate against workers who support unionization. If management hears of union activity, it should contact Washington Farm Bureau so that we can review the law and discuss your options.

### Action – Meeting Scheduled for September 22 at 5 p.m.

Washington Farm Bureau has scheduled a meeting and rally in support of Ruby Ridge Dairy for 5 p.m. September 22 in Pasco. A location is being chosen now. All Washington Farm Bureau members should attend the meeting.

In the meantime, if a manager is approached by a worker with a union organizing petition or similar threat, the manager should tell the worker that he or she is not able to speak for the company on such matters, but should direct the worker to the proper person. The manager cannot ignore the request – he or she must refer the union organizer to the proper person on the management team, who will immediately schedule a meeting.

The management team should listen to the union organizer, ask questions, and take notes. The organizer may attempt to “exchange lists” of workers. Under no circumstances should this occur. **Do not provide any information about your workforce, not even the total number of employees.** As soon as the meeting concludes, you should contact your attorney and Washington Farm Bureau to assess the situation and the likelihood of a campaign against you.