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## **WASHINGTON FARM BUREAU ANNOUNCES SUPPORT FOR WORKERS' COMP INITIATIVE**

LACEY, WA—The board of directors of the Washington Farm Bureau, the state's largest general agricultural organization, has endorsed Initiative 1082, which would allow private insurers to sell industrial insurance in Washington state.

The goal of Initiative 1082 is to lower industrial insurance (workers' compensation) costs for employers, while also maintaining safe workplaces. I-1082 would dissolve the state-run monopoly on workers' comp by allowing private insurers the ability to sell industrial insurance in the state. Even though fewer claims have been filed (a 55 percent decrease in claims frequency since 1990), administrative costs at L&I have gone up 82 percent in the past 10 years. I-1082 does not seek to address or limit the benefits injured workers should receive.

“Initiative 1082 would give us a tool to fix Washington's broken workers' comp system simply by providing choices,” said Washington Farm Bureau President Steve Appel. “Forcing the state to compete in a free marketplace, rather than allowing it to continue to run an inefficient monopoly, would allow Washington to become more competitive with other states vying for businesses and jobs.”

Initiative 1082 would set up a system in which employers could choose where to purchase industrial insurance: the state fund, a private insurance company, or self-insurance. Washington is currently one of only four states that forbid private insurance in favor of a government monopoly. As such, the Department of Labor & Industries, which administers the state fund insurance program, has no incentive to run its program in a manner consistent with best practices in the private sector.

Washington Farm Bureau has lobbied the legislature for bipartisan changes in this long-broken system for the past several years, including during the 2010 legislative session. Because legislators have been unwilling to make the necessary reforms, the board of directors of the Washington Farm Bureau believes that this request for change must be brought to the people in the form of Initiative 1082.

“The agricultural sector is poised to lead our state out of this recession,” continued Appel. “I-1082 would give the farmers and ranchers of Washington, and other businesses, the tools needed to help make our state's economic recovery happen faster for all of us who live here.”

The state's \$38 billion food and agriculture industry employs 160,000 people and contributes 12 percent to the state's economy.

Washington Farm Bureau is a 38,000-member advocacy organization representing family farmers and ranchers across the state. For more information about the Washington Farm Bureau's history of advocating for workers' comp reform, visit [www.wsfb.com](http://www.wsfb.com) or call 1.800.331.3276.

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