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**Farmworker Justice Statement on
the Introduction of the “Fairness for Farm Workers Act”
to Grant Agricultural Workers Equal Access to Overtime Pay**

Farmworker Justice strongly supports the Fairness for Farm Workers Act introduced today in the Senate and the House by Sen. Kamala D. Harris of California and Representative Raúl M. Grijalva of Arizona with numerous cosponsors. Farmworker Justice and our partners have been working with members of Congress on this important step toward treating agricultural workers with the respect they deserve.

The Fairness for Farm Workers Act would amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (FLSA) to remove the discriminatory denial of overtime pay to agricultural workers as well as end most exclusions from the minimum wage still applicable to some farmworkers. Today, June 25, marks the date 80 years ago when President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the FLSA. Not until 1966 were some workers on farms and ranches added to coverage under the minimum wage. The exclusion of farmworkers was rooted in racism at the time of the New Deal, when most agricultural production was in the South and many of the workers were African-Americans.

It is long past the time to grant farmworkers the same rights to overtime pay and the minimum wage that other workers have long possessed. The bill is not just about fairness in wages. It is also about job safety. Some employers, lacking any extra cost for overtime, force 60- or 70-hour work weeks, which can result in fatigue-related injuries and fatalities.

The state of California, which leads the nation in the value of agricultural production and employs more farmworkers than any other state, has passed legislation that over several years’ time will grant agricultural workers time-and-one-half pay after 40 hours of work in a week. California previously ended discriminatory exclusions of agricultural workers from the minimum wage. Employers in other states should be expected to treat agricultural workers equally. We ask Congress today to pass the Fairness for Farm Workers Act, which would gradually extend overtime pay to farmworkers.

Farmworker Justice President Bruce Goldstein said, “Farmworkers engage in difficult and dangerous work, for long hours, day in and day out, to ensure that America has an abundance of food. Yet farmworkers are excluded from many basic labor protections that other workers enjoy. It is long past time to end our nation’s discrimination against farmworkers and to extend to farmworkers coverage under such basic rights as overtime pay. We are very pleased to support Sen. Harris’s and Rep. Grijalva’s Fairness for Farm Workers Act which will end farmworkers’ exclusion from overtime pay and remove remaining exclusions of farmworkers from the minimum wage.”

Farmworker Justice, based in Washington, D.C. and founded in 1981, is a national advocacy organization that empowers farmworkers to improve their living and working conditions. www.farmworkerjustice.org

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