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Ag groups' ads discourage farmworker unionizing

BY MATHEW MIRANDA AND MELISSA MONTALVO
mmiranda@sacbee.com
mmontalvo@fresnobee.com

Major agriculture organizations have combined forces to spend millions on Spanish-language radio advertisements

discouraging farmworkers from voting in union elections.

Radio ads promoting anti-union rhetoric on multiple popular radio stations across the state and Spanish-language digital media over the past nine months have attacked a 2023 California "card check law"

aimed to make it easier for farmworkers to vote in union elections. In some cases, the ads platform misinformation, according to labor experts.

Behind the majority of the radio ads is the California Farmworker Information Center, a registered nonprofit and charity

founded in 2023 by executives from the Western Growers Association, California Fresh Fruit Association and California Citrus Mutual — all groups that opposed the "card check" law.

The group has spent nearly \$2 million on "public education/advertising" in 2023 and ex-

pects to spend another \$1.8 million combined over the next two years, according to May 2023 filings with the California Attorney General's Office. Other organizations, like the California Farm Bureau and Farm Employers Labor Services, have also bought radio ads.

These anti-union ads are an attempt to combat the new legislation and blunt recent organizing wins.

The California Agricultural Labor Relations Board has received four election petitions since the law's passing, which is far more than in recent years.

SEE FARMWORKER, 5A



PAUL KITAGAKI JR. pkitagaki@sacbee.com

Celebrity advocate Paris Hilton wipes a tear as state Sen. Aisha Wahab, D-Hayward, talks during a bipartisan press conference to highlight Senate Bill 1043, which is intended to bring transparency and accountability to youth residential facilities, on Monday. Hilton was sent to one such facility when she was 17. Also at the podium are Sens. Janet Nguyen, R-Huntington Beach, right, and Susan Rubio, D-Los Angeles County, far right.

Hilton at Capitol to lobby for 'troubled teen' bill

BY ANDREW SHEELER
asheeler@sacbee.com

Sacramento is familiar with star power. Celebrities often come to the state Capitol to lobby on behalf of legislation (or as elected officials).

On Monday, the celebrity in question was actor, reality show

star and heiress Paris Hilton, who talked about her experience in California's "troubled teen" industry.

Hilton was speaking on behalf of SB 1043, a bill by Bakersfield Republican Sen. Shannon Grove, intended to bring transparency and accountability to youth residential facilities, such as the one where Hilton was sent when

she was 17.

"I know firsthand the horrors that happen behind closed of youth residential facilities," Hilton said. "...It's a nightmare that no child should ever have to endure."

While in custody, Hilton was subjected to isolation and denied "even the most basic rights," she said.

She described being unable to tell her parents about mistreatment without the phone being taken away and being subject to physical retribution.

"I lived in constant fear, not knowing what would happen next," she said. "...What's even more disturbing is my horror story is not unique."

Grove said that "many of us have seen the recent media surrounding these troubled teen facilities across the country."

While California has taken strides to address concerns of

SEE BILL, 6A

State bond could raise \$10B for affordable housing programs

BY LINDSEY HOLDEN
lholden@sacbee.com

Will voters accept more ballot measures that would authorize billions of dollars in new bond funding?

They weren't enthusiastic last month, when they barely approved Proposition 1, which will provide \$6.4 billion for mental health treatment and housing.

But a California lawmaker has high hopes for legislation that would put a \$10 billion bond to pay for affordable rental housing and homeownership programs on the November ballot.

Even before going to voters, though, the bill would need to advance through the Capitol amid a scramble for state bond dollars as legislators continue to seek alternative funding streams during a tough budget year. And Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas, D-Hollister, is reluctant to push a broad bond agenda.

Assemblywoman Buffy Wicks, D-Oakland, on Monday made her case for Assembly Bill 1657, which would raise money for a handful of state housing programs, including those funding rental and supportive developments, home loans and farmworker and tribal housing. The measure is currently in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

"We need more money for affordable housing now," Wicks told a group rallying in support of her bill near the Capitol. "So we are going to fight like hell to make sure we get this bond on the ballot. And we are talking to

SEE HOUSING, 5A

With mail theft reports rising, residents seek solutions

BY ANGELA RODRIGUEZ
arodriguez@modbee.com

Even with no signs of forced entry, mail is seemingly disappearing from boxes across Sacramento. U.S. Postal Service officials say there are counterfeit master keys on the loose.

Police received 456 calls about mail theft in the city last

year alone.

While it's difficult to know how many thefts were the product of a stolen key, residents across the capital region say they've noticed more and more missing mail in the last few years.

About a year and a half ago, Postal Service Inspector Jeff Fitch said, thieves were able to get a hold of a master key.

"A letter carrier was robbed of a postal key," he said in a phone interview with The Sacramento Bee last week. Though that key was recovered and the suspect arrested, he said "counterfeit keys are still being used to steal mail."

Sacramento resident Nathan Grimes wanted to do something

SEE RESIDENTS, 6A



California Department of Fish and Wildlife

One solution the USPS has recommended is switching to electronic mailboxes, Congressman Ami Bera said.



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