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Davis should veto farm-labor bills

The farm-labor bills dealing with arbitration that await Gov. Davis' action are flawed and unfair — SB 1736 and SB 1156.

No law forces any private-sector employer or union in the United States into binding arbitration when negotiations reach an impasse. It's unfair to impose this on California farmers.

Some unions have successfully converted election victories into contracts under the Agricultural Labor Relations Act.

The Christian Employees Union won 178 elections between 1975 and 1997 and had 178 contracts. The Teamsters Local 63 won 28 elections and had 28 contracts in the same period. The United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1096 won 26 elections and had 21 contracts. The UFW must accept some responsibility for its poor conversion record.

In a few dozen cases, growers were found to have failed to bargain in good faith. Those growers paid the price by paying their workers the difference between their earned wages and what they might have been paid had their employer and the UFW reached a contract. This is known as the "make-whole" remedy — a powerful disincentive for bad-faith bargaining.

These bills would do away with the right of parties to voluntarily contract with each other.

Davis should veto both bills.

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