HB 1695

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, March 5, 2007

House Bill No. 1695

HOUSE BILL NO. 1695 - By: ENNS and DORMAN of the House and ANDERSON of the Senate.

An Act relating to agriculture; creating the Oklahoma AgrAbility Project Act; providing legislative findings; defining terms; establishing services to disabled farmers; providing eligibility requirements; authorizing fund; requiring report under certain circumstances; providing for codification; and providing an effective date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 5-501 of Title 2, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Oklahoma AgrAbility Project Act".

SECTION 2. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 5-502 of Title 2, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

The Legislature finds the following:

1. Oklahoma is one of the leading agricultural-producing states in the nation. By being involved in such a diverse and highly mechanized industry, the more than one hundred thirty-five thousand agricultural workers in Oklahoma are susceptible to any

one of a number of work-related injuries and chronic health problems that limit the ability of an individual to safely continue farming;

2. Available estimates indicate that each year in Oklahoma more farm workers sustain fatal injuries than any other work group and often have nonfatal injuries which result in permanent physical disabilities affecting their future income;

3. It is estimated that nationwide more than two hundred thousand farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural workers experience injuries that result in lost work time. Of these injuries, five percent (5%) have serious or permanent results;

4. According to recent survey data, approximately seventeen thousand Oklahoma farmers have permanent disabilities as a result of accidents, health-related ailments, and age.

5. Farm operators and workers are typically highly skilled individuals and the loss of these individuals to a disability negatively impacts the Oklahoma farm economy. The AgrAbility Project established by the United States Department of Agriculture has been successful in helping agricultural workers with a disability to continue to farm. A similar program established by the state, working as part of the existing Oklahoma AgrAbility Project, will assist even more Oklahoma citizens in receiving the necessary assistance and will benefit the state agriculture industry.

SECTION 3. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 5-503 of Title 2, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

As used in the Oklahoma AgrAbility Project Act:

UNDERLINED language denotes Amendments to present Statutes.
BOLD FACE CAPITALIZED language denotes Committee Amendments.
~~Strike thru~~ language denotes deletion from present Statutes.

1. "Oklahoma AgrAbility Project" means the joint program of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, ABLE Tech, Langston University, and Oklahoma Assistive Technology Foundation, established in accordance with the AgrAbility Program established by the United States Department of Agriculture; and

2. "Production agriculture" means production for commercial purposes of crops, livestock, and livestock products.

SECTION 4. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 5-504 of Title 2, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

A. Subject to available funds, the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service shall provide through the existing state program, and contract with other entities that assist disabled farmers, assistance to individuals who are engaged in farming or an agriculture-related activity and who have been affected by disability.

B. Services provided by the Oklahoma AgrAbility Project shall include, but are not limited to:

1. A toll-free information and referral hotline;

2. The establishment of networks with local agricultural and rehabilitation professionals;

3. The coordination of community resources;

4. The establishment of networks with local agricultural and health care professionals to help identify individuals who may be eligible for assistance and to help identify the best method of providing that assistance;

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5. The provision of on-the-farm information and technical assistance regarding equipment modification, assistive technology, environmental modifications, and work accommodations;

6. Job restructuring; and

7. The provision of information on, and assistance regarding the development of, alternative jobs.

SECTION 5. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 5-505 of Title 2, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

To be eligible to receive assistance under the Oklahoma AgrAbility Project Act, an individual shall:

1. Be a resident of Oklahoma;

2. Derive a portion of income from production agriculture;

3. Have an impairment that creates a condition of disability; and

4. Meet any additional eligibility requirements set forth by the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service.

SECTION 6. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 5-506 of Title 2, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

The Oklahoma AgrAbility Project Fund may be created at some future time as funds become available to provide low-cost direct assistance to eligible clients through agricultural work accommodations and technologies, to build capacity in health care

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providers through educational offerings, and to direct a volunteer peer support network to assist clients and their families impacted by disability issues.

SECTION 7. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 5-507 of Title 2, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

If state funds are utilized, unless otherwise required by federal law, the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service shall provide the Speaker of the Oklahoma House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Oklahoma Senate a copy of any report or other document that it provides to the United States Department of Agriculture concerning the Oklahoma AgrAbility Project.

SECTION 8. This act shall become effective November 1, 2007.

COMMITTEE REPORT BY: COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, dated 03-01-07 - DO PASS, As Coauthored.

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