



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – News Release 2013-1**

**COURT ORDERS GROWER, RBI PACKING, LLC, TO STOP DISCRIMINATING AGAINST ITS FARMWORKERS WHO WERE TERMINATED FOR UNION ORGANIZING**

**SACRAMENTO, CA** (February 19, 2013) – On Friday, February 15, 2013, Judge Perantoni of the Riverside County Superior Court, after learning that RBI Packing, LLC of Mecca, California fired approximately 55 farm workers, ordered RBI to stop discriminating against its employees on the basis of their union activity and to offer them priority in hiring for all agricultural jobs at the company's Blythe-based lemon ranch. Just days after the workers were fired the General Counsel of the Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB) filed a petition in the Superior Court of Riverside County to keep these workers from being permanently terminated because of their union activity. Judge Perantoni granted the ALRB's request for an injunction and relied on evidence presented by the ALRB that approximately 55 farmworkers were all fired the same day the company was properly notified by the ALRB that many had signed union cards with the United Farm Workers union and the farmworkers wanted to have an election for union representation. Despite having been fired, the farmworkers participated in an ALRB-supervised election where they voted unanimously, 51 to 0, to be represented by the United Farm Workers (UFW).

In granting the ALRB's request for an injunction, the Court found that the General Counsel had reasonable cause to believe that these workers were unlawfully fired and ordered that all farm work on RBI Packing's lemon ranch in Blythe be offered to the crews who were fired. To ensure compliance with its order, the Court granted the ALRB access to RBI Packing's farming operations and payroll records. This injunction will be in effect until the union's claims of retaliation are resolved through the ALRB's administrative procedures. "As an agency, it is our job to make sure that farmworkers can exercise their rights, free of intimidation, coercion or retaliation. The Court properly applied the strong protections afforded to workers under California law. That means that the farmworkers' rights and jobs are protected," said Sylvia Torres-Guillén, the General Counsel of the ALRB. "We hope that this decision will send a message to all farm workers, employers and unions, that the ALRB will take swift action to enforce the law and deter future violations."

The General Counsel won this order using recently-amended provisions of the Agricultural Labor Relations Act which allow the General Counsel to seek immediate relief to prevent discrimination during the pendency of the administrative prosecution of the case. Orders, such as that granted by Judge Perantoni in Riverside, prevent employers from intimidating and coercing workers in the exercise of their rights during the time it takes for workers' complaints to be resolved.

The California Agricultural Labor Relations Board was created in 1975 to ensure peace in the fields of California by guaranteeing justice for all agricultural workers and stability in agricultural labor relations. The Board seeks to achieve these ends by providing orderly processes for protecting, implementing, and enforcing the respective rights and responsibilities of employees, employers and labor organizations in their relations with each other. Information about the ALRB can be found at [www.alrb.ca.gov](http://www.alrb.ca.gov).

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