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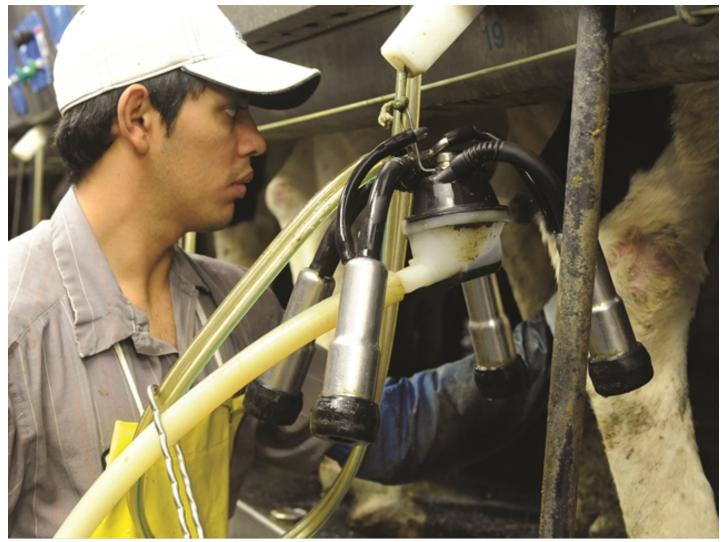
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Ag Community Has Waited Too Long for a Workable Guestworker Program

SEPTEMBER 6, 2017 12:42 PM

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Cong. Bob Goodlatte calls for changes to H-2A guest worker program.

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By Rep. Bob Goodlatte

Since our nation's founding to the present day, farming has been a central part of American life and has fueled our economy. From the produce grown in California's Central Valley, to the corn and soybeans cultivated in the Great Plains, to the cattle, dairy, and poultry farms and apple orchards operated in the Shenandoah Valley, the products grown on American farms feed hundreds of millions of people each year both at home and abroad.

Although no other country in the world rivals America's agriculture industry, our nation's farmers face many obstacles in today's global economy. One challenge is access to a stable and reliable workforce. Many Americans work in the agriculture sector but farmers also rely on foreign workers to fill many jobs that they cannot find Americans to perform.

Unfortunately, the current agricultural guestworker program, known as the H-2A program, is expensive, flawed, and plagued with red tape. The H-2A program's burdensome requirements place employers at a competitive disadvantage in the marketplace and threaten the future of U.S. agricultural production. A guestworker program should help farmers who are willing to pay a fair wage for law-abiding, dependable workers, not punish them.



Cong. Bob Goodlatte

© Cong. Bob Goodlatte

As a former Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, I have had the opportunity to learn first-hand what farmers face in dealing with the H-2A program. It's clear that the current program is outdated and broken for American farmers, and it's well past the time to replace it with a reliable, efficient, and fair program and provide American farmers access to a legal, stable supply of workers, both in the short- and long-term, for seasonal as well as year-round work to ensure our meat and produce continues to be grown in America.

I soon plan to introduce the *Agricultural Guestworker Act*—or the *AG Act*—to create a workable agricultural guestworker program that works better for both American farmers and consumers. The bill incorporates many of the comments and concerns I have heard from the agriculture community over the past several years. Here are some of the key details of the *AG Act*.

The AG Act replaces the H-2A program with a more efficient and flexible guestworker program—known as H-2C—that is designed to meet the needs of the diverse agriculture industry. The H-2C program will be administered by the folks at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, an agency that clearly understands the unique needs of America's farm and ranch operations and the importance of getting perishable agricultural commodities to market in an efficient manner.

The *AG Act* will allow experienced unauthorized agricultural workers to continue working in agriculture by joining the H-2C guestworker program so that they can participate legally in the agricultural workforce.

The *AG Act* also provides farmers with much needed flexibility. Since not all agriculture jobs require the same level of skill and experience, the bill gives employers the opportunity to invest their time training workers for specialized or hard to fill jobs by allowing workers to stay for a longer period of time and provides flexible touchback requirements. The new guestworker program also serves the diverse interests of the agriculture industry by allowing the forestry industry, dairies, raw food processors, and other year-round agricultural employers to participate when adequate domestic labor cannot be found.

Further, the AG Act ensures that the marketplace, not Washington, drives the agriculture industry. It offers workers and employers more choices in their employment arrangements, making it easier for workers to move freely throughout the marketplace, both to seek optimal working conditions and meet farmers' fluctuating needs.

The agricultural community has waited far too long for a workable guestworker program and it's past time to enact a solution. When not enough Americans can be found to fill jobs, the *AG Act* ensures that American farmers have access to a reliable workforce to fill positions needed to keep their farms afloat. The House Judiciary Committee plans to move this bill soon so that farmers can continue growing our food and our economy with the assurance that their labor needs will be met.

Representative Bob Goodlatte (https://goodlatte.house.gov/) (R-Va.) is Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee (https://judiciary.house.gov/), which has jurisdiction of U.S. immigration policy. He is also the former Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee (https://agriculture.house.gov/).

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Cherelyn Talle Los Angeles, CA 9/6/2017 08:25 PM I am indeed very happy for my life; My name is Cherelyn Talle maybe, I never thought that I will live on earth before the year runs out. I have been suffering from a deadly disease (HIV) for the past 4 years now; I had spent a lot of money going from one places to another, from churches to churches, hospitals have been my every day residence. Constant checks up have been my hobby not until last Month, I was searching through the internet, I saw a testimony on how Dr. Quality helped someone in curing her HIV disease, quickly I copied his email which is (qualityharbalhome@gmail.com). I spoke to him, he asked me to do some certain things which I did, he told me that he is going to provide the herbal to me, which he did, then he asked me to go for medical checkup after some days after using the herbal cure, I was free from the deadly disease, he only asked me to post the testimony through the whole world, faithfully am doing it now, please brothers and sisters, he is great, I owe him in my life. if you are having a similar problems just email him on (qualityharbalhome@gmail.com) or simply whats-app him on: +22891742175. He can also cure disease like Cancer, Diabetes, Herpes. Etc. You can reach me on email: cherelyntalle@gmail.com Help share this to save lives..

Jackie Schmidts

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This is an excellent concept, we need to upgrade and revise the migrant worker policy in the U.S. and this idea should move forward as fast as possible!

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