



AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FEDERATION®

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October 2, 2017

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Chairman
House Committee on the Judiciary
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The American Farm Bureau Federation, the nation's largest general farm organization, commends your introduction of the "Agricultural Guestworker Act" (AG Act). We support swift consideration and approval of this legislation by the House Judiciary Committee and call on all members of the committee to vote in favor of the bill when it is scheduled for a vote.

In AFBF's 2014 study of the economics of immigration and ag labor, we noted that labor is farmers' third-highest expense, accounting for 17 percent of production costs for the sector and up to 40 percent to 50 percent in labor-intensive subsectors such as fruit, vegetables and horticulture. The nation's food security and up to \$9 billion in U.S. agricultural production are at stake if the immigration issue is not solved. Moreover, how the issue is solved is critical.

The new guestworker program established by the Ag Act offers vast improvements over the existing H-2A program, opening up new opportunities for subsectors such as dairy, mushrooms and others. There are provisions in the legislation that have raised concern among our members. AFBF does not support a cap on the number of visas for the new H-2C program. Similarly, the transition to a new program should be as seamless as possible, providing stability in our existing workforce and affording fairness both to growers and to workers. The Ag Act provides the correct structure to address these twin issues by establishing a new guest worker program and affording legal status for existing workers. We will work with you and other members on both sides of the aisle to refine these provisions and ensure the best possible outcome for U.S. agriculture.

Thank you again for your ongoing commitment and leadership on this issue. We pledge our readiness to work with you to secure swift approval of the Ag Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Zippy Duvall".

Zippy Duvall
President