



MESSAGE FROM MARSHA
House District 19, State Representative

COLORADO FARMERS, AN INDUSTRY IN PERIL?

Let me begin by saying that I am against all forms of illegal immigration!

I believe the borders must be made secure and that U.S. Congress has failed the American citizens again. While Congress is arguing regarding amnesty or not, farmers are saying they have a seasonal worker shortage.

Farmers do not want amnesty or illegal immigrants on U.S. soil; they need legal seasonal nonimmigrant foreign workers to work in their fields.

The Federal H-2A temporary agriculture program establishes a means for agricultural employers who anticipate a shortage of U.S. workers and need temporary or seasonal nonimmigrant agricultural foreign workers to tend or harvest crops, or perform other agricultural labor or services.

But the bureaucracy that has developed from this program no longer takes into account the main reason that it was initially set up: the critical seasonal and timely nature required in farming. The program has utterly failed many farmers, and they have found themselves in the same dire situation as last year. The H-2A program seems to be burdened by delay, confusion and a shortage of staff. Many farmers as well as policy makers are concerned that

there is a breakdown in the H-2A program that negatively impacts Colorado's farmers, Colorado's Agriculture Industry and ultimately Colorado Consumers. One of Colorado's largest industries may be in peril due to a shortage of nonimmigrant foreign seasonal workers.

As part of the H-2A program, farmers are responsible for all transportation, housing and insurance costs for their seasonal workers. The average wage is approx \$10 an hour for a nonimmigrant seasonal worker. Once the farming season is finished the seasonal worker is required to go back to their country of origin, again the farmer pays for these transportation costs for the nonimmigrant worker.

There is no bill at this time and there is no intent to create another guest worker program! I am attempting to open discussions with the Dept. of Agriculture, Dept. Labor and Employment and private businesses to see if there is a role for any of them to ensure the efficient processing of H-2A applications for Colorado farmers.

Questions that need addressing are;

1. What is the potential shortfall of seasonal workers for our Colorado farmers?
2. Where is the breakdown in the H-2A process?
3. What is the potential impact to Colorado farmers if they do not get enough seasonal workers to help in the fields?
4. What is the potential impact to Colorado's Agriculture industry by a shortage of seasonal workers?
5. What is the potential impact to the citizens of Colorado by the inability of Colorado farmers to supply Colorado fruits and vegetables to grocery stores?

As long as the H-2A federal program exist, and is funded, in part, by Colorado taxpayers, I believe it is the responsibility of policy makers to ensure that this program functions efficiently and effectively.

There have been some ideas put on the table that sound interesting, ideas that need much more research. If you have any ideas or suggestions

regarding this very important issues please email me at marshalooper@hughes.net.

If you have any questions or concerns about this issue or any other issue, please call me at 719-238-5600, email me at marshalooper@hughes.net or visit my website at WWW.GOMARSHA.ORG. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent you!

Respectfully,

Marsha Looper
Colorado State Representative
House District 19