



1201 New York Avenue, NW • #600 • Washington, DC 20005
Tel. 202-289-3120 • Fax 202-289-3185 • www.ahla.com

Governmental Affairs Department

Marlene M. Colucci
Executive Vice President for Public Policy

April 7, 2008

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AH&LA) and our members in every state, I am writing to **sign the Boustany discharge petition for H.R. 1843, the Save Our Small and Seasonal Businesses Act.**

The survival of lodging properties throughout the country depend on their having successful seasons. During these peak seasons, they are able to generate the revenue necessary to offset the rest of the year when business is slow and maintain their full-time staffs year-round. During their busy seasons, many hoteliers must supplement their full-time staffs with temporary workers who fill jobs that often last only 4 to 5 months.

Most workers do not find these temporary seasonal jobs attractive because they would rather work in a permanent position. As a result, there is a severe lack of labor available to hoteliers during their busy seasons. Many hoteliers have utilized the federal H-2B program which allows them to hire temporary seasonal labor to support their permanent staffs when no other workers can be found. These workers are critical to seasonal properties nationwide. Workers through this program allow hoteliers to maintain their level of service, abide by all terms of the program, have taxes deducted from their pay, and go back home after their work period has expired.

Unfortunately, the number of participants in the program is limited to 66,000 annually with 33,000 reserved for the first half of the fiscal year and the remaining number available for the second half. The cap for the second half of the year (which began on April 1) was met on January 2 – four months before the period began.

H.R. 1843 would renew the extremely successful policy of exempting returning workers from counting toward the annual 66,000 limit. Approved overwhelmingly twice, the provision expired at the end of last September.

Despite the cumbersome, lengthy and expensive process in applying for H-2B workers, hoteliers still desperately need the program. Without this program, many will be forced to keep part of their properties closed, cancel events, or lay off full-time employees.

Unfortunately, some are blocking consideration of H.R. 1843 on its own because they are trying to take advantage of the H-2B's widespread bipartisan support by attaching other legislative measures to it. As a result, seasonal hoteliers and their permanent employees are being severely impacted through no fault of their own.

Essentially, Congress is punishing hoteliers and other seasonal businesses for doing the right thing and following the law.

Hoteliers throughout the country are entering their busiest time of the year. They need access to temporary workers through the H-2B program. I urge you to **sign the Boustany discharge petition for H.R. 1843, the Save Our Small and Seasonal Businesses Act, so that the measure can be passed as soon as possible.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marlene M. Colucci".

Marlene M. Colucci