

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

R. BRUCE JOSTEN
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

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TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business federation representing more than three million businesses and organizations of every size, sector, and region, urges you to pass a clean extension of the H-2B returning worker program, as outlined in S. 988 and H.R. 1843, the "Save Our Small and Seasonal Business Act."

At the end of fiscal year 2007, an important provision expired that allowed H-2B seasonal workers who participated in the H-2B program, and abided by all of rules of the program in one of the last three years (including returning to their country of origin upon expiration of their visa), to be exempt from the H-2B cap in subsequent years. Employers in industries such as landscaping, hospitality, seafood processing, and other seasonal businesses rely on these workers for a few months of the year to supplement their U.S. workforce.

The H-2B cap has already been reached for fiscal year 2008, and employers will be unable to meet their workforce needs if relief is not enacted soon. Without the H-2B returning worker exemption many small businesses will be in danger of losing contracts, having to scale down, or closing their doors permanently.

Employers utilizing the H-2B program go through three separate federal agencies and one state agency. Employers must certify that no U.S. workers were available, undergo an intensive recruitment period, and pay H-2B workers the average prevailing wage as set by the Department of Labor for the duties being performed.

The Chamber urges you to pass a clean extension of the H-2B returning worker exemption, as outlined in S. 988 and H.R. 1843, as soon as possible. H-2B relief this year will ensure that seasonal businesses continue to contribute to the national economy to their full capacity.

Sincerely,



R. Bruce Josten