

Shawn McBurney, Co-Chair
American Hotel &
Lodging Association

Laurie Flanagan, Co-Chair
American Nursery &
Landscape Association
Professional Landcare
Network

Executive Committee:

American Horse Council

American Immigration
Lawyers Association

American Rental Association

American Trucking
Associations

Asian American Hotel
Owners Association

Associated Builders and
Contractors

Associated General
Contractors of America

Essential Worker
Immigration Coalition

Federation of Employers
and
Workers of America

Interlocking Concrete
Pavement Institute

International Association of
Amusement Parks and
Attractions

International Franchise
Association

National Association of
Realtors

National Club Association

National Federation of
Independent Business

National Fisheries Institute

National Restaurant
Association

National Roofing
Contractors Association

National Ski Areas
Association

National Thoroughbred
Racing Association

Outdoor Amusement
Business Association

Tree Care Industry
Association

U.S. Apple Association

U.S. Chamber of Commerce

March 6, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Hoyer:

On behalf of seasonal employers from the lodging, landscaping, waterman, restaurant, tourism, construction and other industries, we are encouraged to see that you scheduled H.R. 1127, a bill to extend visa classifications for religious workers and international medical graduates, for consideration on the House Suspension Calendar today and that it passed overwhelmingly.

During the last Congress, there was a great deal of concern about the consideration of such "piecemeal" immigration measures, despite the urgent need to renew successful policies in existing guest worker programs. We are happy to see that this is indeed not the case as evidenced by the speedy consideration and passage of H.R. 1127 a mere 7 legislative days after its introduction.

We strongly encourage you to now schedule H.R. 1136, "The Save Our Seasonal and Small Business Act of 2009," for immediate consideration by the House.

As you have correctly recognized, temporary visas, whether they be for international medical graduates, religious workers or America's small business owners, are a vital component of economic growth and the retention of American jobs in industries nationwide. H.R. 1136 will renew a critical returning worker exemption that small business owners often rely to fill seasonal jobs when sufficient domestic workers are not available.

The H-2B program has historically been very successful by allowing these businesses to supplement and support their full-time American workforce with seasonal temporary workers during their peak seasons. As you know, only after employers have engaged in extensive efforts to recruit American workers do they turn to the H-2B program, which is a much more expensive and time-consuming process.

The H-2B visa and the returning worker provision have proven to be much more than a simple temporary worker visa program. It has become a key to survival for small businesses nationwide. Without access to this vital program, many of our nation's small and seasonal employers will have no choice but to shutter their businesses. A prime example of this can be found in Maryland's crab industry. As noted in the *Baltimore Sun* article on February 6, 2009: "If Congress does not move quickly to make more [H-2B Visas] available, other [crab] processors say they won't open this spring. And the loss of a year's income, several say, means that they probably would shut their businesses for good."

We urge you to take steps now that will provide a lasting solution to our nation's seasonal employment needs.

Sincerely,

The H-2B Workforce Coalition