



**Congress of the United States
House of Representatives**

Congress Does Nothing: Small Businesses on the Brink of Collapse

March 6, 2008

Dear Colleague:

Local economies across the United States are facing an immediate labor crisis. Seasonal jobs that have been filled for years by temporary H-2B workers are vacant. Sugar cane is not being processed, rice crops can't be sorted or bagged, and crawfish and crabs are being turned away by processors who simply don't have the workers to clean and pick the fishermen's catch.

The H-2B visa program provides the small and seasonal businesses that drive many of our nation's regional economies with **legal**, seasonal workers. The FY 2008 cap of 66,000 H-2B workers was met this year on January 2. In past years, Congress acted responsibly and allowed certain returning workers to be exempt from the H-2B cap in order to help meet the needs of the many seasonal businesses that rely on these workers. Unfortunately, Congress allowed the returning worker provision to expire last year, and thousands of small businesses nationwide face critical job shortages.

The **bipartisan** returning worker provision is now being held as a political hostage. While American business owners suffer, legislation to fill this need sits idle. Now is the time for action, I introduced H.Res. 1025 to call up, for immediate consideration, Congressman Bart Stupak's Save Our Small and Seasonal Businesses Act (H.R.1843). I have attached additional information for your review on the back of this letter. It is my sincere hope that with my colleagues' help we can find a quick resolution to the crisis occurring in local communities around our nation.

Hundreds of industries nationwide are currently affected by the lapse of the returning worker provision. Please contact Patrick Large in my office (patrick.large@mail.house.gov or x5-2031) if you have any questions or to find out what else you can do to help in the fight to save our small and seasonal businesses.

Sincerely,

Charles W. Boustany Jr., MD
Member of Congress

Supplying the Workforce to Keep America's Local Economies Prosperous

The H-2B visa program provides legal, seasonal workers with the opportunity to come to America on a temporary basis and provide labor to the small and seasonal businesses that drive many of our nation's local economies. America's small businesses need immediate resolution to this growing crisis. Congressman Charles W. Boustany Jr. introduced legislation to address this pressing issue.

Problem:

- On January 2, 2008, the cap for critical H-2B visas was reached, crippling small businesses and agricultural communities around the nation who now lack access to essential workers they have depended on year after year.
- Nationwide, approximately half of the needed workers are currently available for unfilled jobs. More than 120,000 H-2B workers came into the U.S. legally last year. This year's total allotment of 66,000 H-2B visas was met in early January.
- In Louisiana, the agriculture community is facing a \$2.2 billion loss in revenue as a result of the worker shortage.
- Despite tremendous pressure from a bipartisan Congressional coalition, Democratic leadership and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus rejected multiple proposals to extend a returning worker provision.
- Last year, Congressman Bart Stupak (D-MI) introduced a bipartisan bill (H.R.1843) to quickly solve this crisis by restoring the returning worker program, which expired at the end of fiscal year 2007.
- The returning worker provision allows recent H-2B visa workers to return without counting against the 66,000 visa cap.

Solution:

- Congressman Charles W. Boustany, Jr. introduced H.Res. 1025 providing for immediate consideration of the original Stupak bill.
- If the Committee on Rules fails to approve this measure, Congressman Boustany will entertain the possibility of entering a discharge petition to force immediate consideration on the House floor.
- Please support the Boustany measure, H.Res. 1025, by urging your leadership and members to call their Representative in an effort to save America's small businesses.

