



## **Some O.C. Businesses Struggle With Seasonal Workers**

By KEIRA BENSON -- WMDT 4/28/2008

Every summer about four-million people visit the Town of Ocean City. Tourism officials aren't expecting a change in the amount of visitors this year. But there could be a change in the amount of foreign workers who are employed in the resort town.

Every summer, about 700 people are hired to work in a Phillips Restaurant or Hotel in Ocean City. This year, the chain may have to do without about 120 of them who normally come on H-2B Visas.

Phillip's 21st Street General Manager Sean Bryan says, "We're not allowed to begin the process until 120 days before our need and that's what keeps us out of the cap. The cap has been getting filled earlier and earlier every year."

The government caps the annual number of H-2B visas at 66,000. In the past, workers who'd come on H-2B Visas within the past three years could return without being included in the cap. This year, the returning worker exemption was not renewed.

It's something that's already affected Bryan. He says, "We didn't have our workers so we decided to push back the season for this location."

Bryan says he's been lobbying in Washington. He says, "If they could get something passed within the next month, we could get some workers in here for mid, to late June."

If not, Bryan says he'll find some other way to keep the doors open.

If lawmakers don't approve an extension, it does leave an opening for local workers. But, experts say there's not usually enough local interest to meet the need.