

Foreign worker cap hurts resorts; Sun Valley proactive

By Gary Stivers

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Sun Valley is one of the few resorts which won't be short on offshore help this year, thanks to a diligent personnel department.

Reductions in customer service at ski resorts could follow Congress' failure to act on legislation removing a limit on H-2B visa holders. Sun Valley Company has relied upon to staff positions in restaurants and room service and skilled staff for snowmaking, ski instruction and courtesy patrol.

Luckily that won't apply to Sun Valley.

"We got in before the September 27," Sun Valley Personnel assistant Paula Rath said Monday. "We should be O.K."

Rath explained H-2B personnel aren't students as J-1 nationals are. "They tend to be more mature and experienced," she said. "They can be skilled or unskilled but they're not youngsters."

A cap of 33,000 H-2B visas was reached on September 27, Rath said, and resorts nationwide learned last week that all additional applications will be rejected by the federal government unless Congress acts on legislation already written but languishing in committee.

The Associated Press reports the California Ski Industry Association plans to begin actively lobbying congress to remedy the oversight beginning today, Monday, October 8.

Last year, a similar situation was 'fixed' by U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), who was concerned how the skilled worker shortage might affect Maryland's soft-shell crab industry.

California's ski area group might rattle enough cages to get a response from Congress.