

# The Washington Post

## 25,000 Additional Work Visas Give a Boost to Md. Crab Industry

By Southern Maryland Notebook

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The Department of Homeland Security announced last week that 25,000 additional visas would be made available for seasonal workers, helping Maryland's crab industry hire the part-time workers needed to keep the businesses running.

"When they told me they didn't have the workforce they needed this season, I was proud to fight for them," said Sen. *Barbara A. Mikulski* (D-Md.). "I am pleased the Department of Homeland Security responded to my requests and released these additional visas."

Federal immigration laws capped the seasonal workers' H-2B visas at 26,000 per year. Many crab processing facilities on the Eastern Shore were denied visas because of the cap, creating severe labor shortages, according to official reports. Mikulski and Reps. *Steny H. Hoyer* (D-Md.) and *Frank M. Kratovil Jr.* (D-Md.) worked to get more visas released.

Gov. *Martin O'Malley* (D) thanked the congressmen and said in a statement: "Maryland's historic crab industry depends on the H-2B program, and today's announcement is good news for all whose livelihood depends on the crab industry. These additional temporary worker visas will allow the crab picking houses on our Shore to remain strong throughout the season with the workforce they need."

The governor signed a letter in April 2008 with 16 other governors requesting an extension of the cap. In June, he initiated a letter signed by seven other governors asking for relief.