

Businesses hurt by H2B visa restrictions

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MACKINAC ISLAND, Mich., March 29 (UPI) -- U.S. business owners say they are scrambling to find workers since Congress has imposed restrictions on an H2B visa program.

The Detroit Free Press reported that businesses throughout Michigan are feeling the pinch since lawmakers allowed an exemption to lapse that allowed some guest workers to return to their old employers each year.

Moreover, lawmakers cut the H2B program nearly in half, the newspaper said.

"We will weather the storm, but it's very, very difficult to make it work," said Dan Musser, whose family owns Mackinac Island's Grand Hotel, which hires about 375 people each summer on H2B visas.

The change is also hurting crabmeat processors in Maryland, ski resorts in Colorado, circuses in California, hotels on Cape Cod and landscapers in Ohio, the newspaper said.

"There's no reason to have H2B visas at all," said Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, a Washington think tank that supports restrictions on immigration.

"It's based on the premise that there are jobs Americans won't do. It's absurd," he said. "Employers need to increase wages, change benefits or come up with new ways of recruiting."