



Circuses have worker problems

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Reporter: Mystic Matthews

Email Address: mystic.matthews@kxii.com

HUGO, Okla. -- The show must go on, but this year it could be a lot harder for circuses in Oklahoma and around the country. Circus officials say because of immigration reform, they will lose most of their workers. Mystic Matthews explains.

Not every job at the circus is glitz and glamour. The set-up and tear-down of the big top makes the show happen, especially when that circus operates two shows a day, seven days a week.

"We're having to tear down, sleep, drive, set up be ready for two shows. It's going to be very taxing on our people," said Trey Key with Culpepper & Merriweather Circus.

Trey Key, with the Culpepper and Meriwether Circus, says this year with immigration being such a hot issue. Some industries, like the circus business, will not have the temporary workers they need, but he says these workers have nothing to do with the people who are coming into the United States illegally.

The current H2B visa program allows for 66,000 new workers to come into the country for a certain period of time, but congress did not vote to keep the bill that allows visas for returning foreign workers, who leave the country and come back every year.

Before, returning workers were not included in the 66,000 new workers, but now they will be making a huge labor shortage on the industries that depend on seasonal workers like Carson and Barnes Circus.

"We depend on workers, men to move our tent everyday to move our operation," Traci Cavillini, also with the Carson & Barnes Circus, said.

Three circus companies have winter quarters in Hugo -- and all three hire foreign workers -- most come from Mexico-- to do the manual labor.

"Not Americans to fill jobs. Advertise, prove every year, American's don't want it."

But without the people who set up the tents and do the driving, there would be no show, making it hard to live by the old saying, "The show must go on, but the show will go on."

"I don't know how, but were going to make it work," Traci says.