

## Circuses say they're hurt by visa limit

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**Associated Press**

HUGO, Okla. – Circus owners say restrictive U.S. immigration laws have left them without enough workers.

Congress did not approve a provision that allows foreign workers who were in the country on special visas last year to return, and this has left some circuses short of people to sell tickets, build rides and put up the big top.

"Most Americans don't want to give up living in one place, having a house, to travel nine months a year," said Jim Judkins, who has worked in the circus industry for the past 32 years.

He said the worker shortage will prevent his Circus Chimera from going on the road this season. His is one of four circuses that winter in Hugo in southeastern Oklahoma.

The special H-2B visas are given to seasonal workers who must pass a series of background checks and reviews. Workers with H-2B visas are allowed to stay in the country for 10 months and must pay taxes.

Congress has set a limit on the number of new visas that can be issued in a fiscal year. Under federal law, 66,000 visas applicants are issued during the fiscal year. That number has already been met.

In past years, Congress has passed legislation that allows existing workers in good standing to return on H-2B visas, but amid the debate for immigration reform, that provision has stalled.

Jim Royal, general manager of the Kelly Miller Circus, estimates about 22 of his workers are in the country on H-2B visas. Some have worked for the circus for more than a decade.

"These workers are a real asset for us," he said.