



IMMIGRATION AND TEMPORARY LABOR:

The Contributions of Temporary Worker Visas to the US Economy

Across the country, American companies rely on immigrant workers to fill seasonal and labor-intensive jobs that cannot otherwise be filled. The Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco has found that low-skilled immigrant workers help companies grow and create additional – often higher-paying – job opportunities for Americans.¹ In 1986 under President Ronald Reagan, in recognition of the value and need for immigrant workers, two guest worker programs were established – the H-2A for farm workers and H-2B program for non-farm workers. The programs were designed to allow enterprising immigrants to enter the country legally as temporary workers for vital American industries such as agriculture, construction and hospitality. Unfortunately, as currently administered, these visa programs are not designed for businesses to succeed.

For American companies to compete and grow, the guest worker programs should be streamlined. For example, applying for an H-2A and H-2B visa involves multiple separate federal agencies. H-2B visas are also subject to annual caps that frequently don't meet America's demand for labor. The administrative and regulatory requirements of the programs effectively penalize American companies that play by the rules. Without access to a competitive workforce, companies and growers around the country are curtailing operations – and some are even closing.

¹ Giovanni Peri, "The Effect of Immigrants on U.S. Employment and Productivity" FRBSF Economic Letter, August 30, 2010, available at <http://www.frbsf.org/publications/economics/letter/2010/el2010-26.html> (last visited Dec 8, 2010).

² <http://www.americanexperiencellc.com/visa-services/h2b-non-agricultural-worker-visa-program/>

³ U.S. Chamber of Commerce. "The Economic Impact of H-2B Workers." Washington, D.C. October 2010.

⁴ Lynne Finnerty, "Import Labor or Import Food - Who Will Decide," August 4, 2008. <http://www.fb.org/index.php?fuseaction=newsroom.focusfocus&year=2008&file=fo0804.html> (last visited Jan 20, 2011).

⁵ Testimony of James Holt, Committee on Agriculture, U.S. House of Representatives (Oct. 4, 2007), at 5.

THE CURRENT SYSTEM PRESENTS COSTLY BUREAUCRATIC BURDENS ON BUSINESSES:

IT TAKES APPROXIMATELY **8 WEEKS** TO PROCESS AN **H-2B VISA** AND TYPICALLY COSTS **\$2500** PER APPLICANT.²

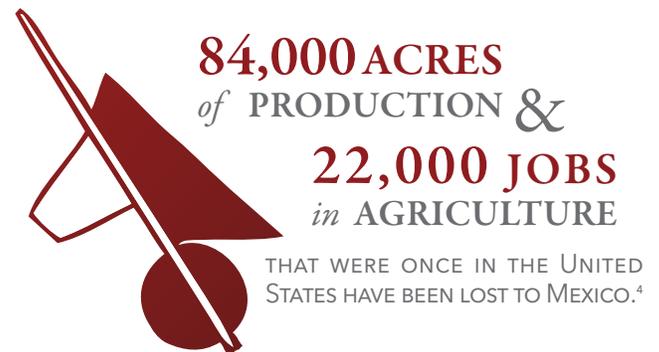
BUSINESSES RELY ON THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF SEASONAL AND TEMPORARY WORKERS:



ONE IN THREE BUSINESSES WOULD CLOSE

OR REDUCE THEIR OPERATIONS IF THEY COULD NOT HIRE WORKERS THROUGH TEMPORARY VISAS.³

AMERICA IS LOSING JOBS AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES TO OTHER COUNTRIES:



AGRICULTURAL WORKERS CREATE ADDITIONAL JOBS:



THREE ADDITIONAL JOBS ARE CREATED IN THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY FOR EVERY FARM WORKER.⁵