

January 15, 2009

Dear President-Elect Obama,

On December 18, 2008, the Bush Administration finalized extensive changes to the H-2A agricultural guestworker program **that are scheduled to go into effect on January 17, 2009.** These regulations are devastating to farmworkers. The undersigned groups write in opposition to the Administration's final H-2A regulations and to ask for your leadership in overturning these regulations.

While doing nothing to address the problem of the hundreds of thousands of undocumented workers already here performing our agricultural work, the Administration's regulations effectively result in a huge new abusive guestworker program. Abuses in the current H-2A program are extensive, yet the new regulations weaken enforcement and government oversight in the program. Further, the regulations would slash already low farmworker wages and weaken other labor protections in the H-2A guestworker program. Employers will not have to engage in any meaningful recruitment of U.S. workers and domestic worker job preferences will be severely limited and eventually eliminated. For the first time, U.S. workers could be paid less and receive fewer benefits than their H-2A guestworker counterparts. With the state of our nation's economy, we cannot afford to put our agricultural workforce in jeopardy and undermine U.S. workers. The Administration's approach contravenes our most basic labor and immigration policy concepts and is utterly inconsistent with the thoughtful, bipartisan AgJOBS bill, which is supported by both labor and management.

The plight of farmworkers in abysmal working conditions has never been more apparent with the death of six farmworkers in the fields this summer due to heat-related causes. Their working conditions are horrendous and deadly; they need to be improved not worsened.

You have a critical opportunity to stop this historic mistake from happening. Please take all necessary actions to stop these regulations before the H-2A program is expanded under these damaging new rules. Farmworkers need and deserve your help.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Forest Workers and Harvesters
Amanecer, Inc.
America's Voice
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO
American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations AFL-CIO
American Friends Service Committee
Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs
Augustana Lutheran
California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation
Carlisle Immigrant Solidarity Committee
CASA of Oregon

Castañares Consulting
CAUSA
Central Valley Opportunity Center, Inc. (CVOC)
Centro de los Derechos del Migrante, Inc.
Change to Win
Church Women United Illinois
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles
D&L Communications, Inc.
Delaware Governor's Advisory Council on Hispanic Affairs
Equal Justice Center
Fair Immigration Reform Movement, a project of the Center for Community Change
Farmworker Association of Florida
Farmworker Health Services, Inc.
Farmworker Justice
Farmworker Legal Services of NY, Inc.
Farmworkers Self-Help, Inc.
Florida Legal Services, Inc.
Franciscan Friars of St. Barbara Province
Friends of Farmworkers
Gallon Takacs Boissoneault & Schaffer Co., LPA
Global Workers Justice Alliance
The Green Farm
Heartland Center
Housing Assistance Council
Hudson River HealthCare
HumanityWorks!
Human Rights Office, Catholic Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, MO
Idaho Community Action Network
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Immigrant Worker Project
Immigration Equality
Interfaith Worker Justice
International Brotherhood of Teamsters
Jesuit Conference
Korean American Resource & Cultural Center, Chicago, IL
Korean Resource Center, Los Angeles, CA
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA)
Latin American Community Center
League of United Latin American Citizens
Legal Aid Justice Center (VA)
MAFO, Inc.
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
Michigan Migrant Legal Assistance Project, Inc.
Migrant Health Promotion
Missions Ministry Team of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church

NAF-MHDC

National Center for Farmworker Health, Inc.

National Council of La Raza

National Employment Law Project

National Farm Worker Ministry

National Immigrant Justice Center

National Immigrant Solidarity Network

National Immigration Forum

National Immigration Law Center

National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)

National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association

Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest

NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

New\^View Consulting

North Carolina Justice Center

Northwest Federation of Community Organizations.

Orange County Interfaith Committee to Aid Farm Workers

Oregon Farm Worker Ministry

Oregon Human Development Corporation

Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters

Oxfam America

PCUN (Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste)

Rick Nahmias Photography, Los Angeles, CA

Rural and Migrant Ministry, Inc.

Rural Housing, Inc.

Service Employees International Union

Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Central Leadership

Sisters of Charity, BVM

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur Base Communities

Sisters of St Francis of Assisi

Southern Poverty Law Center

Student Action with Farmworkers

Sugar Law Center for Economic and Social Justice

Telamon Corporation

Transnational Worker Rights Clinic

UMOS, Inc.

United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries

United Farm Workers

United Farm Workers Foundation

United Food and Commercial Workers International Union

United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society

The Victoria Foundation

Voces de la Frontera

Workplace Fairness

cc: Majority Leader Reid & Speaker Pelosi