



Talking Points

Rep. Goodlatte's "Agricultural Guestworker Act" - An Exploit and Displace Strategy

- Rep. Goodlatte's "Agricultural Guestworker Act," H.R. 1773, is not only one of the worst guestworker bills in decades, it also fails to address our broken immigration system. Instead of providing what this nation desperately needs, the creation of a comprehensive immigration solution, this bill represents a flawed piecemeal approach to convert an entire industry, from the fields to the processing plants, to an army of guestworkers. This bill sends the message to aspiring citizens that "we want your labor only, you and your family are not welcome here."
- Rep. Goodlatte's bill fails to provide any opportunity for the current farm labor force to get on a roadmap to citizenship. Instead, Goodlatte creates a report to deport program. The only option for current undocumented farmworkers would be to apply to become temporary workers in the new guestworker program, however, they would then be required to leave the country after their job or their visa ends, with no chance to become a member of the society they help to feed. These workers would simply be trading one form of second-class status for another. The bill would tear families apart as it fails to provide any opportunity for the farmworkers' spouses and children to obtain immigration status. Consequently, many farmworkers would not come forward to apply for H-2C status.
- Rep. Goodlatte's bill will lead to job loss for multitudes of US workers as employers will have easy access to up to 500,000 vulnerable guestworkers each year. The bill reaches far beyond traditional agriculture to include year-round, permanent jobs in industries such as poultry and meat processing plants.
- Rep. Goodlatte's bill offers fewer protections than the notoriously abusive Bracero program. By slashing virtually all of the protections in the current exploitative H-2A program, abuses in the new program will be amplified as the new guestworkers will be even more vulnerable to exploitation and will have extremely limited access to judicial relief and legal assistance. US workers who are not displaced will face huge wage cuts and other reductions in working conditions due to lack of protections for US workers and temporary workers.
- Rep. Goodlatte's bill stands in stark contrast to the carefully-negotiated, balanced agricultural immigration compromise reached by a bipartisan group of Senators, the United Farm Workers, and agricultural employers. This hard-fought compromise will benefit not only farmworkers and agricultural employers, but also our national interest in a secure, safe food supply. There is a way forward: we urge you to support a comprehensive approach to immigration reform that creates a roadmap to citizenship for our nation's 11 million aspiring citizens and includes the bipartisan agricultural compromise. We are a nation of immigrants, not a nation of guestworkers. Our nation should move forward towards a brighter future, not regress to an exploitative past with programs worse than the Bracero program.