



Farmworker Justice Statement in Opposition to House Immigration Bills

The House of Representatives is set to vote this week on two immigration bills — Rep. Goodlatte’s “Securing America’s Future Act” (the “Goodlatte bill”) and the Border Security and Immigration Reform Act of 2018 (the “Ryan bill”). Farmworker Justice strongly opposes both bills. Instead of recognizing the valuable contributions of immigrants to our country, these bills reflect hostility towards immigration and immigrants, including farmworkers and their family members.

Rep. Goodlatte’s “Securing America’s Future Act” (H.R. 4760) combines many of the worst elements of anti-immigrant policies, including building a costly border wall, increasing arrests and deportations of undocumented immigrants, attacking the sensible approach to policing by sanctuary cities, and eliminating existing opportunities for family reunification as well as the diversity visa program. Although it purports to offer relief to Dreamers, the bill only offers a three-year, temporary legal status, without any permanent solution or path to citizenship.

As introduced, Rep. Goodlatte’s bill includes the **Agricultural Guestworker Act**, which would replace the current H-2A agricultural guestworker program with a devastating new H-2C program. The H-2C program would expand employer access to potentially millions of vulnerable new “guestworkers,” while slashing worker protections for hundreds of thousands of U.S. farmworkers, leading to job losses, lower wages and exploitation. **The bill does not provide experienced undocumented farmworkers or their family members with a path to immigration status and citizenship.** Instead, it requires workers to return to their homeland, with the only possibility of return as subjugated contract laborers under the proposed, abusive H-2C program. Goodlatte’s bill would convert the labor forces in farming and agricultural processing and manufacturing into a massive system of exploited guestworkers.

The second bill, developed by Speaker Ryan and other Republicans who have touted it as a “compromise,” is not reasonable at all. It is a harsh and cruel measure. The bill contains all the elements of the White House’s immigration “framework,” including billions of dollars in border wall funding, increased and punitive immigration enforcement, and significant cuts to legal immigration. Although it offers a path to citizenship for some Dreamers, this path is based on a convoluted “points” system that would leave many Dreamers unprotected. Furthermore, Dreamers’ long path to citizenship would be contingent on Congressional funding for border enforcement. Agricultural workers are not addressed specifically.

Congress should end the Trump Administration’s cruel practice of family separation (a policy which is not dictated by law, but rather the result of the current Administration’s own actions.) Neither of these bills do. We must reform our broken immigration system through policies that honor our history as a nation of immigrants and respect the immigrants who contribute to our nation.

Many farmworkers and their children are living in fear of immigration enforcement, even as they work hard in their low-wage jobs to produce the food that feeds us. One of the most urgent immigration reforms needed is legislation to grant undocumented farmworkers and their family members a path to immigration status and citizenship.

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