

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
June 20, 2013

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“Guestworker” Bill Approved by House Judiciary Committee Is Anti-Immigrant and Anti-Worker

Farmworker Justice Statement on Rep. Goodlatte’s Immigration Bill

Washington, DC – The House Judiciary Committee last night narrowly passed an amended version of the “Agricultural Guestworker Act” sponsored by Committee Chair Robert Goodlatte (R-VA). This legislation is fundamentally anti-immigrant and anti-worker and will make life worse for hundreds of thousands of farmworkers already in this country, many of them U.S. citizens, the president of Farmworker Justice said today.

“This legislation would replace the current H-2A agricultural guestworker program with a devastating new H-2C program, expanding employer access to hundreds of thousands of vulnerable new “guestworkers” brought in from outside the country. It is anti-U.S. worker because it allows employers to provide lower wages and worse benefits to both American citizens and permanent-resident immigrants. As the new program erases existing labor protections, U.S. workers will be displaced or earn lower wages.

“It is also harmful to those undocumented workers already laboring in our fields. Unlike the compromise bill in the Senate, this bill denies current undocumented farmworkers, who make up more than one-half of the farm labor force today, the chance to earn legal immigration status or citizenship. Instead, undocumented workers would be required to self-deport with only the hope of obtaining a job offer and an H-2C visa. Instead of supporting families, this bill will cause farmworkers with spouses and children living here in the U.S. to suffer separation and hardship.

“This is a one-sided bill that does nothing to benefit the men and women working to put food on our tables. It stands in stark contrast to the more balanced agricultural immigration compromise drafted by a bipartisan group of senators and a coalition of interested parties including the United Farm Workers and agricultural employers. That compromise would benefit not only farmworkers and agricultural employers, but also our national interest in a secure, safe food supply.

“We are a nation of immigrants, not a nation of guestworkers,” Goldstein said.

[Click here](#) for a full summary from Farmworker Justice of the “Agricultural Guestworker Act”, H.R. 1773.

For interviews with Bruce Goldstein, contact Jessica Felix-Romero at jromero@farmworkerjustice.org or (202) 800-2524.

Farmworker Justice, based in Washington, D.C., is a nonprofit organization that seeks to empower migrant and seasonal farmworkers to improve their living and working conditions, immigration status, health, occupational safety and access to justice.

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