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“Guestworker” Bill Would Aggravate Farm Labor Problems and Deny Undocumented Workers Chance at Citizenship

Farmworker Justice Statement on Rep. Goodlatte’s Immigration Bill Following Markup by House Committee on Judiciary

Washington, DC – Legislation likely to be approved by the House Judiciary Committee today will make life worse for hundreds of thousands of farmworkers – many of them U.S. citizens – already in this country and working in the fields, while denying current undocumented farmworkers a road map to citizenship and destabilizing the country’s farm labor force, the president of Farmworker Justice said today.

“The Agricultural Guestworker Act (HR 1773) sponsored by Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R-VA) would aggravate the problems in our broken immigration policy by expanding employer access to vulnerable new “guestworkers” brought in from outside the country, displacing hundreds of thousands of U.S. citizens and legal immigrants working in agricultural labor. The guestworkers available to employers under the new system would be deprived of basic labor protections and guestworkers attempting to challenge a violation of wage standards or other working conditions would not have meaningful access to attorneys or the courts. Meanwhile, growers would have access to another 500,000 new guestworkers at wage rates even lower than those prevailing today.

“While some undocumented farmworkers in the U.S. would be eligible to become guestworkers, these workers would simply be trading one form of second-class status for another, and would have no chance to become a member of the society they help to feed. The bill would also tear families apart by failing to provide any opportunity for the farmworkers’ spouses and children to obtain legal immigration status.

“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.*