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Omnibus Budget Bill Strips Protections for H-2B and U.S. Workers

The International Labor Recruitment Working Group (ILRWG) is deeply disappointed that the proposed House of Representatives 2016 Omnibus spending bill contains provisions that strip protections and lower wages in the H-2B program. These shameful provisions will result in pink slips for U.S. workers and exploitation for foreign workers.

The greatest challenge facing the U.S. economy is wage stagnation. Millions of working families are struggling to make ends meet. Congress should not enact measures that would further erode wages and standards for difficult and often dangerous work in industries such as landscaping, forestry, seafood processing, hospitality, carnivals, and construction. We urge the conference committee to remove the provisions affecting the H-2B visa. The House language would lead to the admission of almost 200,000 additional low wage guestworkers and eliminate protections that keep workers from being brought to the U.S. and idled without work or pay for long periods of time. The proposed language would also prevent U.S. workers from getting first dibs at jobs by preventing enforcement of U.S. worker recruitment rules and deny U.S. workers the rights to the same wages as H-2B workers. Finally, the bill would permit employers to pay unfairly low wages for both migrant and U.S. workers.

These H-2B provisions are piecemeal immigration changes that should not be passed through the back door of appropriations. Any immigration amendments should be debated in regular process with immigrant rights and U.S. worker organizations at the table.