



FARMWORKER JUSTICE

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Farmworker Justice Statement on House Agricultural Immigration Reform Bill

(WASHINGTON, DC) Today, Reps. Zoe Lofgren (D-CA) and Dan Newhouse (R-WA), introduced the “Farm Workforce Modernization Act of 2019.” This bipartisan legislation was the result of complex negotiations between members of Congress, farmworker advocates, including the UFW, UFW Foundation, and Farmworker Justice, and agricultural employer organizations.

Farmworker Justice President Bruce Goldstein stated: “We applaud the bipartisan work in the House to address the fundamentally unfair conditions experienced by many farmworkers due to our nation’s broken immigration system. Farmworker Justice supports this important legislation. The bill provides a path to lawful permanent residency for undocumented farmworkers and their family members. The bill also revises the H-2A agricultural guestworker program. While we are concerned by some aspects of the bill, it preserves and expands important protections for US and foreign workers and we recognize that reform requires compromise.”

Of utmost importance, the legislation would recognize the important contributions of farmworkers to our nation's food and agriculture systems. It would eliminate the constant fear of deportation by enabling hundreds of thousands of farmworkers and their immediate family members to obtain a lawful immigration status and a pathway to citizenship. At least half of the nation’s roughly 2.4 million farmworkers are undocumented immigrants. With legal status and a path to citizenship, farmworkers would be better able to improve their wages and working conditions and challenge serious labor abuses. This would result in a more stable farm labor force, and greater food safety and security to the benefit of employers, workers, and consumers.

The bill also would revise the existing H-2A visa program to address some farmworker and employer concerns with the program. Farmworker advocates have pressed for reforms to reduce widespread abuses under this flawed program, while agricultural employers have lobbied heavily to remove most of its modest labor protections. The compromise includes important new protections for farmworkers, but also contains difficult concessions that were made in order to reach an agreement.

The legislation is a fair compromise that includes concessions from all sides. Farmworker Justice supports the Farm Workforce Modernization Act of 2019 because the bill, if passed, would improve significantly hundreds of thousands of farmworkers’ lives.

Farmworker Justice is a national advocacy organization for farmworkers with over thirty-five years of experience serving the farmworker community regarding immigration and labor policy. www.farmworkerjustice.org

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