



FARMWORKER JUSTICE

For Immediate Release

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Rep. Goodlatte's Agricultural Guestworker Act Would Create Exploitative Guestworker Program

Washington, D.C. - On October 2, 2017, House Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.) introduced the "Agricultural Guestworker Act." Farmworker Justice strongly opposes this proposal.

Rep. Goodlatte's proposal would devastate America's current and future farmworkers. By stripping away labor protections that evolved over decades in response to abuses, the proposed H-2C visa program would subject hundreds of thousands of U.S. farmworkers to job losses and lower wages, and would allow exploitation of vulnerable guestworkers. Rep. Goodlatte's bill also fails provide a workable solution for undocumented farmworkers, who make up at least half of the current workforce and are vital to maintaining our food and agricultural systems. And not just farmworkers would be impacted -- the Agricultural Guestworker Act reaches beyond traditional farm jobs to include agriculture-related processing and manufacturing jobs, as well as forestry and aquaculture.

Farmworker Justice President Bruce Goldstein stated: "Increased deportations and other immigration enforcement have exacerbated an already untenable situation for farmworkers as well as their employers. This bill would aggravate the unfairness and dysfunction in our current system. Rep. Goodlatte's bill proposes a massive new guestworker program that would deprive U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents of job opportunities, lower farmworkers' already poor wages, and allow exploitative conditions for new guestworkers, worsening labor conditions for all farmworkers. And instead of taking steps to stabilize the existing experienced, productive workforce through a path to citizenship for current undocumented farmworkers, Goodlatte's bill would substitute one third-class status for another by seeking to convert undocumented workers into subjugated contract laborers. Rep. Goodlatte's proposed H-2C visa program deserves no serious consideration."

We are a nation of immigrants, not a nation of guestworkers deprived of economic freedom and political representation. Congress should reject the Goodlatte bill and other pending anti-worker, anti-immigrant proposals regarding agricultural workers. It makes no sense to allow employers to hire more guestworkers without first addressing the need to legalize the hundreds of thousands of experienced farmworkers who are already contributing to our economy and society, many with U.S. citizen children and deep ties to their communities. Our agricultural labor system

deserves a real solution that provides a path to citizenship for farmworkers, as is offered in the Agricultural Worker Program Act introduced by Rep. Gutierrez (D-IL) and Sen. Feinstein (D-CA).

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