



ADDRESS: 900 Circle 75 Parkway, Suite 205 • Atlanta, Georgia 30339

PHONE: (404) 325-2954 • TOLL FREE: (800) 325-2954 • FAX: (404) 325-2955

FLA Members Help Tree Planters with Guest Worker Issue

More information about H-2b

The vast majority of trees planted on timberland in the Southeast are planted by seasonal migrant H-2b workers. On September 30, 2007 the Returning Worker Exemption under the annual cap for H-2b visas expired. On October 1, 2007 the federal government announced that the H-2b visa cap for the first half of fiscal 2008 had been filled. No more visas will be available for workers whose jobs begin in November or later. This means an unprecedented shortage of legal workers to reforest our timberlands this planting season.

H-2b Visa Program

- H-2b workers are temporary non-agricultural workers who enter the country for seasonal work. After a maximum stay of 10 months they must return to their home country. H-2b is a temporary guest worker program, not an immigration program.
- The U.S. Department of Labor certifies that each H-2b employer hires every interested and available American worker before a single visa is granted. No American jobs are lost.
- H-2b employers must offer and pay the prevailing wage to both American workers and H-2b workers. In Alabama, for example, that wage is \$9.75/hour for tree planters. This is not cheaper labor.
- H-2b workers are treated like any other worker on payday. They receive a payroll check with itemized deductions for Social Security, Medicare, state income tax, and federal income tax. H-2b employers must pay their share of Social Security and Medicare, along with federal unemployment taxes, state unemployment taxes, and workman's compensation insurance on all H-2b workers.
- H-2b workers must pass a security interview and background check by the U.S. State Department before they are issued a visa and allowed in the U.S.

H-2b Employers

The industries using this visa program the most are landscaping, forestry, construction, hospitality, and food processing. H-2b workers are certified in every state across the country. These employers are following the law by hiring legal H-2b workers. Without these workers, American employees of these predominantly small businesses will suffer layoffs or termination if the businesses cannot survive.

To contact your senators or representatives, call (202) 224-3121 and ask for support and a vote to pass H.R.1843 in the House of Representatives and S.988 in the Senate.