

Farm Bureau Sends Revision Request

True to the wishes of governmental agencies, the grace period before adopting the new proposed reforms to the H-2A program has resulted in a barrage of requests by the users of the system—namely commercial agricultural and farm interests.

The American Farm Bureau Federation is the most recent entry into the fray. They have sent a list of recommendations to the U.S. Department of Labor. Included among their requests is for the dropping of the “adverse effect wage rate.”

“Growers have been clamoring for years for a more sensible, market-based wage,” said AFBF President Bob Stallman. “We are hopeful the Labor Department can implement this reform in an open, transparent manner that makes it easier for farmers and ranchers to use the program.”

“Other reforms AFBF supported in its comments were: eliminating the 50 percent rule regarding domestic recruitment; providing a housing voucher for program users; and including packing and processing employees, as well as the dairy sector, as part of the program.

“Farm Bureau also asked the department to change some of its proposals. AFBF said the 120-day recruitment requirement was far too long and should be cut to no more than 60 days. AFBF also called for fundamental due-process reforms in the department’s proposed debarment process, and it strongly urged the department to scale back the enormous increase in fees it was proposing for program participants.

“In comments to a companion rule proposed by the Department of Homeland Security, AFBF urged DHS not to change its existing treatment of sheepherders and how it treats them under its visa provisions.”¹

It remains to be seen if the Department of Labor is open to these informed suggestions.

¹ From American Farm Bureau Homepage, “AFBF Urges Revisions for Temporary Worker Program,” April 15, 2008. Website at: <http://www.fb.org/index.php?fuseaction=newsroom.newsfocus&year=2008&file=nr0415b.html>. (accessed 4-19-08)