

AH&LA Expresses Disappointment Over Failure Of Congress To Provide H-2B Relief

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The American Hotel & Lodging Association (AH&LA) expresses disappointment today following the failure of the United States Congress to include a provision for relief for the H-2B temporary seasonal worker program in its fiscal year 2008 omnibus appropriations spending bill. The bill, H.R. 2764, was passed by the House on a vote of 272-142, one day after the Senate passed it by a vote of 76-17.

'We are extremely disappointed that the House and Senate failed to take any action to provide relief for the H-2B temporary seasonal worker program,' said Marlene M. Colucci, AH&LA executive vice president for public policy. 'As a result of their inaction on this vital issue, many employers will be unable to hire the temporary seasonal workers vital to the sustainability of their businesses, and may in fact face severe economic hardship and be forced to lay off full-time permanent employees. In the most extreme cases, businesses will have no choice but to close for part, or all, of the coming year, striking a severe blow not just to the employers, but their employees, families, and the communities dependent on the jobs and revenue these businesses provide.

'This is an especially bitter pill to swallow as our members are being punished by a House and Senate more concerned with political posturing than achieving results,' said Shawn McBurney, AH&LA senior vice president for government affairs.

The H-2B program is utilized heavily by hoteliers, who often spend thousands of dollars and many hours in aggressive recruiting campaigns attempting to hire Americans for short-term seasonal jobs. When employers are unable to find local workers, they must turn to the federal government's H-2B worker program in order to legally obtain short-term workers.

The number of H-2Bs is capped at 66,000 visas per year, a number which has remained unchanged since the visa category was initially capped in 1990. The 33,000 cap for the first half of FY 2008 was met on September 27, 2007 - three full days before the start of the fiscal year.

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