

URGE CONGRESS TO PASS S.1038 and H.R.2414, THE AGRICULTURAL JOB OPPORTUNITY, BENEFITS AND SECURITY ACT (AgJOBS)

AgJOBS Legislation Introduced

On May 14th Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Representatives Howard Berman (D-CA), Adam Putnam (R-FL), and others introduced S.1038 and H.R.2414, the Agricultural Job Opportunity, Benefits and Security Act (AgJOBS), in Congress. ANLA supports these critically important bills that would stabilize the ongoing labor crisis in the agricultural sector, including nurseries and greenhouses. The crisis has already resulted in decisions by farm owners and managers to scale back or cease production, or even move operations offshore. Localized and costly labor shortages have also been reported in recent years, and will only worsen going forward unless the situation is addressed by Congress.

AgJOBS is a two-part bill. The bill would extensively reform the broken H-2A seasonal worker program, providing farmers with better access to a stable, legal workforce in the future. H-2A reforms of AgJOBS streamline the application process, bring about legal and wage relief and some housing flexibility. The other part of AgJOBS addresses the fact that a majority of the current trained and experienced workforce in the agricultural sector is believed to lack proper work authorization. AgJOBS would offer many experienced and otherwise law-abiding immigrants already employed on American farms and nurseries to earn temporary legal status subject to strict conditions. Workers who meet all the program's requirements would eventually earn the right to apply for residency.

Opponents of any and all immigration reform, such as Lou Dobbs, are already at work to undermine H-2A, H-2B, AgJOBS, and comprehensive immigration. Don't let them determine the industry's future. Congress must hear from you and your employees now! Please act now to let your Senators and Representative know of your support for S.1038 and H.R.2414, AgJOBS.

Letter:

I write to urge your full and active support for S.1038 and H.R.2414, the Agricultural Job Opportunity, Benefits and Security Act (AgJOBS). American agriculture is in continuing labor crisis. The current economic situation has not changed this reality, as few Americans who are looking for work are seeking seasonal and field worker jobs in agriculture.

As a farmer, I know first-hand the vital importance of agricultural and seasonal labor to the survival of our industry and the jobs we provide to the many American workers we employ. Every farmworker job in this country supports the continued existence of three or more American jobs in the upstream and downstream economy that exist because we are producing here.

As Congress continues to avoid the issue, management decisions are being made in agricultural sectors from coast to coast and border to border to scale back operations, move operations out of the U.S., or for the next generation to choose a different future than taking over the family farm. American economic security and food security hang in the balance. It is essential to our economy to correct the labor crisis that currently afflicts agriculture. The bipartisan AgJOBS bill was carefully negotiated by representatives of farm employers and farm workers. It addresses the crisis now, and to the future.

I urge your cosponsorship and support for the solution -- S.1038 and H.R.2414, introduced by Senator Dianne Feinstein, Representatives Howard Berman, Adam Putnam, and a number of supporters from both parties. Thank you for your leadership and courage to address this crisis.