



Issue Brief



H-2B Reform

March 2021

More H-2B Visas are needed:

- Congress provided authority to the DHS to increase H-2B visas for FY 2021.
- Demand for H-2B forestry workers continues to be high.
- More H-2B visas are needed so employers can hire non-immigrant guest workers in a timely manner.
- Congress must provide a permanent and meaningful cap relief for the H-2B visa program as a standalone measure or as part of other relevant legislation.
- Congress must include H-2B cap relief in the FY 2022 final spending bills.
- Seasonal workers plant more than 85% of the acres planted in the United States each year.

Why FRA Supports H-2B Reform

- The forestry sector relies on seasonal H-2B forestry workers when there are not enough available U.S. workers to fill these short-term, remote, and itinerant jobs.
- The Congressionally mandated cap of 66,000 H-2B visas is inadequate to meet the labor needs of seasonal businesses. Currently, demand exceeds the cap of 66,000 visas by two to three times.
- Every H-2B forestry worker supports an additional 4.6 American jobs and contributes to the economy of rural forest dependent communities.
- Before receiving H-2B guest workers, businesses are required to advertise the available jobs to U.S. workers. In FY 2020, the number of U.S. workers who applied for these forestry jobs was only 1.9% of the available positions.
- H-2B forestry workers plant more than 85 percent of the trees on public and private forestland each year, 1.5 billion trees on nearly 2.2 million acres, annually.
- More H-2B forestry workers will be needed to replant trees on forest lands devastated by wildfires in 2020 and to address worker shortages brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is estimated that it will take 3-5 years to catch-up to current backlog.
- Sixty percent of the employers of H-2B forestry workers stated that they anticipate their labor needs to increase in the next 1-3 years. Seventy-three percent said there would not be enough H-2B visas available to meet their tree planting needs.
- The percentage of businesses who did not receive visas for all the guest workers they requested more than doubled from 16% in FY 2019 to 32% in FY 2020.

Request:

- ❖ **Support FY 2022 appropriations language that provides the DHS with the authority to release additional H-2B visas in an efficient and timely manner.**
- ❖ **Urge the DHS to release supplemental H-2B visas immediately.**
- ❖ **Support permanent H-2B cap relief as a standalone measure or part of other relevant immigration legislation.**

About FRA

The Forest Resources Association (FRA) represents the interests of nearly 320 organizations and businesses in the forest products industry. Our members include forest landowners, suppliers, consuming mills, associated businesses, and state forestry associations. FRA members are represented in 49 states and 377 Congressional Districts.

For more information, please contact:

Deb Hawkinson, FRA President, 202-296-3937 or dhawkinson@forestresources.org

Tim O'Hara, FRA Vice President, Government Affairs, 218-390-7965 or tohara@forestresources.org