



South San Joaquin Valley County Farm Bureaus

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February 26, 2018

Congressman Kevin McCarthy
2421 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

RE: H.R. 4760 (Goodlatte)

Congressman McCarthy:

On behalf of six California South San Joaquin Valley County Farm Bureaus, representing over 8,200 Farm Bureau members, we thank you for your continued attention to the topic of immigration. Our six county region is responsible for producing over 60% of California's agriculture and a gross revenue of value added agriculture of \$26.9 billion. The agriculture industry in California's Central Valley is responsible for employing a huge workforce, where 1 in 5 jobs are directly linked to agriculture.

We wish to emphasize that our industry has sought sensible farm and seasonal worker reforms on a bipartisan basis for many years. Now before Congress is the Securing America's Future Act, H.R. 4760, a bill to fund a border wall, address internal immigration enforcement, and extend the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. It also includes the committee-adopted version of the Agricultural Guestworker (AG) Act, which would create a new agricultural visa program. Even with recently introduced amendments, the AG Act would have negative consequences on our industry by harming the current immigrant employees upon whom California farms and ranches depend. We are losing jobs and economic activity on a local and national scale without better tools to ensure an adequate workforce.

The "mandatory touch back" provision in the AG Act is a sensitive topic on both sides of the aisle. For employees and employers to continue feeding the population of the United States and beyond, skilled agricultural workers are a necessity. A mandatory touchback requirement leaves the agricultural industry with no certainty on how to fill the void that this process will establish since most skilled workers have been with their employers for years. As for the employee, with the arbitrary caps set too low and a slow-moving agency, there is no certainty that they will be able to return. For these reasons, the "mandatory touch back" needs to be considered differently for those employees who have been here

with their employers for years.

We ask that you give this issue your full attention by bringing common sense and much-needed immigration and labor reforms that we will support. We strongly encourage you to support amending or replacing the AG Act with a workable solution for agriculture.

Most of the United States' fruits, nuts, and vegetables come from California, which require manual labor to grow and harvest these nutritional valuable crops throughout the entire year. We are proud to represent the agricultural leaders of where we produce the safest food in the world. You are in a position to educate other elected leaders of this fact as you consider how to move forward on the most pressing workforce, immigration, and enforcement priorities. We would like to invite you to discuss this issue with us and look forward to our continued working partnership on this topic and others.