



March 2, 2015

Chairman Bob Goodlatte
U.S. House of Representatives
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member John Conyers
U.S. House of Representatives
B351 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Goodlatte and Ranking Member Conyers:

The undersigned Steering Committee members of the Ag Workforce Coalition (AWC) write in strong opposition to the Legal Workforce Act.

Mandatory E-verify would have a devastating impact on our industry in the absence of a legislative solution for agriculture's labor needs. Immigration enforcement without a program flexible enough to address the labor needs of fruit, vegetable, dairy, nursery, and other farms, and ranches, will result in many U.S. farmers and their farm employees losing their livelihoods and an overall decrease in U.S. agricultural production.

This legislation's effect would extend far beyond the farm gate. If there is no one available to pick the crops or milk the cows, industry sectors that operate upstream and downstream of farm production and harvest will be adversely impacted as well.

Studies have shown that each of the nearly two million hired farm employees, who work in labor intensive agriculture, supports 2 to 3 fulltime American jobs in the food processing, transportation, farm equipment, marketing, retail and other sectors. Mandatory E-Verify without workable labor solutions for agriculture puts these American jobs, and the economies of communities across the country, in jeopardy.

There is no other industry with greater workforce demographic challenges and foreign labor reliance than agriculture. A longer phase-in and/or an exemption from E-Verify is a well-intentioned acknowledgment that agriculture confronts a precarious labor situation, but it does not move us any closer to the permanent solutions we desperately need. Instead, they place a larger target on the backs of American producers who are following the letter of the law today.

We are committed to working with the House Judiciary Committee on legislation that addresses agriculture's labor needs in a workable fashion. If this Congress were to pass reform legislation that truly addresses agriculture's workforce challenges, farmers would welcome an E-Verify system that is simple, efficient, effective, and certain. However, the negative risk of an enforcement-only strategy with no surety of reform that provides a work authorization for experienced agricultural workers and a new, flexible guest worker program for long term stability does not allow us to support this bill.

Therefore, the AWC unequivocally opposes the Legal Workforce Act as it does not also address the agricultural workforce crisis. We urge the Committee not to advance this measure until agriculture's workforce challenges are met with a viable solution.

Sincerely,

American Farm Bureau Federation
AmericanHort
Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association
National Council of Agricultural Employers
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Farmers Union
National Milk Producers Federation
USA Farmers
U.S. Apple Association
United Fresh Produce Association
Western Growers Association
Western United Dairymen.

CC: Members of the Judiciary Committee