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Ag Workforce Coalition Praises Rep. Newhouse for Championing Farm Labor Issues in Appropriations Process

Washington, D.C. (July 19, 2017)—Members of the Agricultural Workforce Coalition (AWC) today praised Representative Dan Newhouse (R-Wash.) for leading the effort in the appropriations process to address agriculture’s labor crisis. Two amendments--offered by Congressman Newhouse in House Appropriations Committee markups of FY 2018 government funding bills—would make reforms to the H-2A visa program in an effort to patch a broken program.

The first, offered and accepted last week during consideration of the FY 2018 Agriculture Appropriations bill, would allow ag employers to utilize Section 514 housing for both domestic and H-2A workers where the units are currently unoccupied. Section 514 provides loans to producers to buy, build or improve housing for farm workers but those admitted through H-2A are currently ineligible.

The second, considered and approved during markup of the FY 2018 Homeland Security spending bill, would amend the H-2A program to allow employers to utilize it for work that is not temporary or seasonal. This would give producers with year-round labor needs a new option as they look to fill jobs on their farms.

“As both a farmer and a former state commissioner of agriculture, Congressman Newhouse knows firsthand that the H-2A program is a bureaucratic nightmare and is currently unusable for large segments of agriculture; yet he also realizes that it is the only program available to help meet the severe labor shortages faced by farmers and ranchers across commodities and across the country,” the Coalition said. “While our ultimate goal is a permanent solution to our current and future labor needs, these two amendments would help ease some of these burdens and give farmers added flexibility. We thank Mr. Newhouse for continuing to be a champion for America’s farmers, ranchers and growers and we look forward to working to ensure these provisions are retained as the appropriations process moves forward.”

About the Agriculture Workforce Coalition

The AWC brings together organizations representing the diverse needs of agricultural employers across the country. The coalition serves as the unified voice of agriculture in the effort to ensure that America’s farmers, ranchers and growers have access to a stable and secure workforce now and in the future.