

THE RIPON ADVANCE

HIRE ACT INTRODUCED BY GONZALES, VALADAO AIMS TO FIX NATIONWIDE LABOR SHORTAGE

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To address the nation's workforce shortage, U.S. Reps. Tony Gonzales (R-TX) and David Valadao (R-CA) on July 18 offered a bipartisan bill to bolster temporary work visa programs.

"In order for our economy to reach its full potential, we need to strengthen and streamline work visa options," said Rep. Gonzales, who sponsored the H-2 Improvements to Relieve Employers (HIRE) Act, H.R. 4708, to streamline the issuance of nonimmigrant temporary work visas.

"I represent 119 cities in Texas. From urban cores to rural communities, one thing unites them all: a desperate need for labor," Rep. Gonzales said. "Unfortunately, solutions such as temporary work visa programs are riddled with red tape, making it difficult for employers to fully staff up. This is especially true for small businesses, farmers, ranchers, and so many others on Main Street that are struggling to get by."

If enacted, H.R. 4708 would amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to stipulate that a certification, or a petition filed on behalf of an alien to temporarily perform labor or services in the United States shall be in effect for a period of three years, according to the text of the bill.

Additionally, H.R. 4708 would permit an in-person interview to be waived for an alien who is seeking to renew status, the text says.

The bill has 16 original cosponsors, including Rep. Valadao and U.S. Reps. Stephanie Bice (R-OK), Maria Salazar (R-FL), Don Bacon (R-NE), and Henry Cuellar (D-TX).

"Labor shortages are having a devastating impact on industries throughout the Central Valley," said Rep. Valadao. "The HIRE Act cuts some of the red tape surrounding our temporary work visa programs to make it easier for employers to address workforce shortages.

"Improving our temporary work visa programs will help reform our broken immigration system and ensure employers can fill these essential roles to strengthen our economy," he added.

The measure has garnered support from the American Farm Bureau Federation, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Americans for Prosperity, the National Immigration Forum, the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Border Trade Alliance, the LIBRE Initiative, the Texas Farm Bureau, the Texas Nursery & Landscape Association, the Fresh Produce Association of the Americas, the Texas Border Coalition, the Texas Association of Business, Texans for Economic Growth, the **Texas Business Leadership Council**, the South Texas Cotton & Grain Association, the U.S. Trotting Association, the National Horsemen's Benevolent & Protective Association, and the National Association of Landscape Professionals.