

WESTERN GROWERS' LEADERSHIP IN H-2A



Western Growers has been the leading agricultural organization in advocating for a comprehensive immigration reform solution that includes legalizing the status of currently falsely-documented farmworkers and a new guest worker visa program to ensure future flows of labor. With the prospect of immigration reform dead until *at least* after the presidential election, and with many members increasingly turning to the H-2A program to meet their labor needs, Western Growers has elevated H-2A reform as a top public policy priority.

Western Growers has been working tirelessly to resolve several immediate crises – including the 2015 technical glitch and current 2016 processing delays – while also working with Congress and the Administration in an effort to streamline the H-2A process.

WG H-2A POLICY OBJECTIVES

◆ RESOLVE CURRENT H-2A PROCESSING DELAYS



Secure funding needed from Congress to provide DOL and USCIS with additional resources to help resolve the backlog of H-2A applications.

◆ MAKE H-2A PROGRAM MORE USEABLE AND ACCESSIBLE TO GROWERS



Secure legislative, regulatory and policy changes to make program more responsive to users' needs.

MEMBER AND INDUSTRY EDUCATION

⇒ STORIES

- ★ 14 Spotlight stories dedicated to the H-2A program ([all stories found here](#))
- ★ 3 Western Growers & Shipper magazine stories dedicated to the H-2A program

⇒ ISSUES FORUMS

- ★ WG holds series of Issues Forums in Oxnard, Salinas and Santa Maria in May to discuss current state of play for H-2A, among other issues
- ★ WG hosts Issues Forums in Fresno, Los Banos and Bakersfield in June to detail current state of the H-2A program, among other issues

⇒ SPEECHES

- ★ Nassif gives speech on H-2A reform to Harvard Private and Public, Scientific, Academic and Consumer Food Policy Group
- ★ Nassif discusses H-2A reform during speech at the Farm Foundation Round Table

⇒ CONFERENCES

- ★ WG staff participates in APMA Conference and presents on H-2A reform
- ★ WG staff discusses H-2A reform at Governor's Forum on Colorado Agriculture



WG TIMELINE OF ACTIVITIES

2015

APRIL 1: Presents at CDFA meeting to oppose H-2A Good Recruiter Pilot Program & raise improvements to H-2A

MAY 14: Meets with DHS officials to discuss streamlining the H-2A visa program

visa system tech glitch

JUNE 24: Nassif appears on [Bloomberg TV](#) to discuss immediate remedies needed to fix the technical glitch

JUNE 18: Drafts, delivers [letter](#) by state leaders requesting State Dept. prioritize H-2A applications over non-emergency visa applications

visa system back online

NOV 4: Meets w/ AZ state administrative officials, congressional staff to tour AZ's San Luis border & discuss H-2A issues

2016

Jan 12: Develops and implements an Executive Committee-approved 2016 H-2A strategy document

Mar 5: Nassif appears on [Fox & Friends](#) to discuss necessary H-2A reforms

Jan 13: Discusses w/ U.S. Consulate General (Nogales, Mexico) how to better serve the H-2A-user community

processing delays

Mar 10: Nassif spoke w/ USDA Secretary Vilsack about H-2A processing delay; WG followed up w/ USDA Chief of Staff to provide points to raise with DOL

Mar 9: Sends letter to CA congressional delegation urging them to ask DOL & USCIS what emergency relief provisions are needed to resolve the backlog of H-2A applications

Mar 18: Sends an email w/ [talking points](#) to members encouraging them to contact Congress

Mid-March: Submitted questions to be asked of DOL at appropriation hearings in the House and Senate and at an Education & Workforce Committee hearing

Mar 23: Sends an email survey to members in an effort to develop data on past and current H-2A processing delays; over 40 members respond

April 13: Coordinates a D.C. fly-in with Board Members to meet with legislative and regulatory offices about taking steps to resolve the current H-2A processing delays

MEDIA COVERAGE

Resnick estimated that California agriculture, already stressed by drought, is losing \$500,000 to \$1 million for each day of delay.

[The Wall Street Journal](#)

The backlog of applications from farmworkers has climbed steadily since June 9, when the U.S. stopped granting H-2A guest-worker program visas, Nassif said. "People are piling up."

[Bloomberg News](#)

"The system is burdensome, very costly and very complex," said Tom Nassif, the CEO of Western Growers. Employers have to pay fees and file applications with multiple state agencies and departments for months in advance of hiring and endure long waiting times for approval, sometimes barely in time for harvest season, Nassif said.

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