

AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL OF ARKANSAS
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President
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January 25, 2021

The Honorable John Boozman
141 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rick Crawford
2422 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
209 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Cotton
124 Senate Russell Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable French Hill
1533 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steve Womack
2412 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear members of the Arkansas Congressional Delegation:

On behalf of our members, many of whom depend on H-2A labor in producing crops, we write to express deep concern for President Biden's January 25th Presidential Proclamation on the [*Suspension of Entry as Immigrants and Non-Immigrants of Certain Additional Persons Who Pose a Risk of Transmitting Coronavirus Disease*](#). This proclamation proposes to limit or prohibit travel from certain countries, including some that provide significant number of H-2A workers. We ask for your immediate help in ensuring that these travel restrictions do not prohibit travel by H-2A workers who represent essential labor for an essential industry. If all travel, including H-2A workers, is prohibited from traveling from these countries to the United States, there will be severe consequences in food production due to labor shortages as there are no viable alternatives available for most employers on such short notice.

As many farms in Arkansas are now beginning to organize and launch their prepping and planting activities for the 2021 crop year, it's vital that they have a workforce available to conduct the necessary and essential labor that makes a crop happen. While we can appreciate the concern for further spread of the COVID-19 virus, including newer and potentially more severe variants, we believe that such risks can be safely addressed without placing wholesale travel bans that can cause significant disruptions to the U.S. economy. We understand that non-essential travel may need to be curtailed, but we'd ask for there to be safe and workable protocols for H-2A workers who are essential to America's agriculture industry. Such protocols could include a plan for testing and quarantine. In addition, there may be a need to implement a vaccination program for this workforce or limitations to air services available for such travel.

We appreciate your consideration of our concerns, and we stand ready to help in your efforts to support the Arkansas agriculture industry on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

John C. King III
President

Agricultural Council of Arkansas

Cc: Governor Asa Hutchinson