



NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Vicki Bendure, APR
(540) 687-3360 or
Lisa Schaumann
(540) 687-5099

ECONOMIC INITIATIVES SHOULD INCLUDE EXTENSION OF RETURNING WORKER EXEMPTION

—Landscape Companies Face Economic Devastation—

HERNDON, Va., January 24, 2008 — While Congress is considering legislation to stimulate the slumping economy, it should also consider a short-term fix for the H-2B guest-worker program. By extending the returning worker exemption on the H-2B program, which expired at the end of fiscal year 2007, Congress will help many American small businesses avoid economic devastation by extending a provision that has been enacted for the last several years. Guest workers who have legally entered and exited the country for years on H-2B visas were denied an opportunity to return this year. Many full-time American jobs are at stake because these essential seasonal workers will not be available to help support employment needs.

The landscape industry is being hit particularly hard, and individual small businesses report they could lose as much as \$3 million in business if the returning worker exemption is not extended. Losses will continue to mount as each week goes by without an extension. Not only does Congress' inaction hurt the \$40 billion landscape industry, it also cripples all of the industries that depend on landscape companies for business — trucking, growers, outdoor equipment, lawn and garden suppliers, insurers, gasoline suppliers, , and many more. Layoffs will impact families across the United States and will result in home as well as business foreclosures.

Landscape companies depend on H-2B workers to do the seasonal work that Americans choose not to fill. The positions are heavily advertised before they're filled by H-2B workers, and H-2B program users are required to pay an aggregated wage rate that is calculated by the U.S. Department of Labor. The return guest worker exemption expired on September 30, 2007, preventing many employers with jobs starting in February from obtaining workers during their busiest time of year.

H-2B workers allow small seasonal businesses to operate during their peak season, and this enables them to maintain their full-time staff year-round. Without an extension of the cap, many seasonal businesses are already making plans to lay off full-time staff due to the inability to take on more jobs and the resulting lack of revenue.

-MORE-

H-2B Crisis

2

“There is no cost to this extension,” states Tom Delaney, director of government relations for the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET). “Including this in an economic stimulus package would make sense and ensure that many small businesses continue to thrive.”

“The landscape industry will be harder hit than other industries this year,” states Corey Connors, director of legislative relations for the American Nursery & Landscape Association (ANLA). “Congress must act quickly before the landscape community is irreparably damaged, and before the repercussions resonate throughout the green industry to growers, suppliers, and retail centers.”

Without viable landscape companies, who can afford care for the green spaces — schools, parks, businesses, and homes where Americans live, work, and play? The fate of the landscape industry depends on Congress’ willingness to act quickly to include a short-term extension of the return guest worker exemption on the economic stimulus package.

PLANET is the association of members who create and maintain the QUALITY OF LIFE in communities across America. With more than 4,200 member companies and affiliates, these firms and their employees represent more than 100,000 green industry professionals. To learn more, visit *LandcareNetwork.org*, or call the PLANET office at (800) 395-2522.

ANLA, a Washington, DC-based trade association, represents green industry business professionals seeking market leadership through advocacy with our nation’s government, a community of industry innovators and experts, and unique profitability focused programming, products and services. To learn more, visit *ANLA.org*, or call the ANLA office at (202) 789-2900.