

January 11, 2008

Dear Professional Landcare Network Supplier Member:

In 2008, **imagine** half of your major landscape service provider customers scurrying to perform their work with **30 percent to 50 percent fewer employees** than they employed at the end of 2007. **Imagine** your customers turning away **30 percent to 50 percent of the work** they performed in 2007. **Imagine** them putting all **equipment purchases on the indefinite back burner**. What previously was thought of as needed equipment replacement will be deferred until the labor crisis is resolved.

You may ask yourself, "**How could this be possible?**" Well, if our industry doesn't mobilize to get the attention of our legislative representatives in Washington, it is not only possible, but highly likely.

The entire green industry is currently facing a crisis that will not only affect most of the Professional Landcare Network's (PLANET's) members but may also influence your 2008 sales as explained above. **We need your help now to mobilize your employees** and your customers to take action in a unified effort with other industries to contact Congress to support the Senate and House bills entitled "**Save Our Small and Seasonal Business Act Of 2007.**"

Years ago when the U.S. Department of Labor instituted the H-2B visa program, the intent was to provide qualified employers with a dependable means to hire guest workers, **but only when qualified U.S. workers were not available**. This process also ensured that the number of work visas issued to alien workers would be limited so that the job opportunities, wages, and working conditions of **U.S. workers would not be adversely affected**.

Due to a gross underestimate in the amount of visas that needed to be issued each year, this well-meaning program has, however, **become a nightmare for the green industry** and for all other industries that regularly employ legal guest workers under the H-2B program (such as the hotel, restaurant, construction, food processing, and forestry industries, to name a few).

The H-2B program is limited to issuing only 66,000 new visas annually. **The current bill, which regulates this number and, more important, allows returning workers to not be counted against this number, has expired**. Some estimate that there are as many as **200,000 returning workers** in the program, plus the additional 66,000 that are issued each year. Once the current bill expires, **only 66,000 will be allowed to work in 2008**. Over the last three years, this 66,000 cap was reached even with the returning workers not being counted. We, therefore, fear that many of our members will be able to rehire less than 1/3 of their previous H-2B employees.

This will cause these businesses to reduce contracts, and, for some, there is the fear that they may not survive.

To effect change, **we need your immediate help**. We know that on some issues it can take as few as seven contacts from constituents to influence the decision of our representatives.

We need to contact every member of Congress with **a prompt, unified, thunderous, and consistent voice in order to make a difference.**

PLANET would like to request that you immediately communicate this crisis to **your employees**. They need to know that **their jobs** will be impacted by the impending **labor crisis** if this problem is not solved. Create an action plan for how your company's **employees can help educate** the decision makers who can assist in solving this **critical labor shortage**.

Please encourage your employees and your customers to **contact their legislators immediately** with information about how losing this valuable labor resource will **adversely** affect their businesses and the entire U.S. economy. We have posted some tools on our Web site, *LandcareNetwork.org*, that can expedite the process.

Initially, we recommend that you **fax your letters** directly to the offices of your legislators to make sure that the communication reaches the right target as quickly as possible. The faxing can be done in addition to sending e-mail or Web communications to reinforce the message. Because of delays caused by security screening, **we do not recommend using regular mail service** at this time. We appreciate your support for this request as well as your association with PLANET. **Through our combined efforts, we can make a difference for our industry.**

If you have questions or suggestions on other ways that your company can help in this area, please contact Tom Delaney, director of government affairs, at (770) 925-7113 or tomdelaney@landcarenetwork.org.

Thank you in advance for your immediate attention to this most important matter.

Sincerely,

Jim Martin, CLP
PLANET President