

Dear Editor:

Landscape contractors and other seasonal employers are in for a major workforce impact. Many maintain a small year-round American workforce, but cannot find the workers needed to supplement this domestic workforce during the busy spring season.

The existing H-2B nonimmigrant visa program provides the only means of legal workers when American workers are not available. Unfortunately, unless Congress acts to extend an existing provision of law before the end of 2007, small businesses across the country will not have access to this source of labor and will suffer severe economic losses.

The ability to hire H-2B workers is vitally important because the vast majority of U.S. citizens, who are legally qualified to perform the manual labor associated with the landscape industry, do not have the desire to work in seasonal, manual-labor jobs.

The H-2B program provides a vital and legal source of seasonal labor for the landscape industry and other industries that cannot fill their labor needs with American citizens. Before a company can hire a worker under the H-2B program, it must undertake an intensive recruitment process to find American workers under the supervision of the Department of Labor. Each state's workforce agency and the U.S. Department of Labor must certify that hiring H-2B workers does not negatively impact American jobs, and then the request must be approved by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The wage rates paid to these workers are well above minimum wage and are set by the U.S. Department of Labor.

Congress must immediately extend the H-2B repeat-worker exemption by passing the "Save Our Small and Seasonal Business Act of 2007" (H.R. 1843, S. 988).