



## **HOUSE LABOR-APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE APPROVES FAVORABLE H-2B PROVISIONS**

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On July 7, the House Labor, Health and Human Services Subcommittee approved its FY 2017 funding bill, including favorable provisions affecting the H-2B visa program, on which reforestation contractors rely to staff treeplanting projects with guestworkers from Central America and Mexico.

The Subcommittee's bill:

- would allow a more extended use of validated third-party private wage surveys to determine the most accurate prevailing wage to be paid H-2B workers. This provision would protect both workers and small businesses to ensure that the fairest wage is being paid.
- would allow H-2B employers to bring in H-2B workers on "staggered entries," so that workers' entry dates can vary throughout the season, to allow workers' entry to correspond to variations in seasonal demand.

"Flexibility is very important in scheduling reforestation work, which is strongly weather-dependent," stated Deb Hawkinson, President of the Forest Resources Association. "It is important to match workers' entry to suitable ground conditions and other weather-related factors for an effective operation that creates quality for clients." She praised Subcommittee Chairman Tom Cole's (R-Oklahoma) initiative in ensuring the inclusion of the provision in the Subcommittee's bill.

The FY 2016 Appropriations bill, now in force, restricts "staggered entries" to the seafood processing sector. The bill the Subcommittee has passed would make the provision available to all H-2B sectors.