

118TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# S. 5299

To streamline the application process for employers seeking H–2A agricultural workers, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 12, 2024

Mr. PAUL introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

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## A BILL

To streamline the application process for employers seeking H–2A agricultural workers, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Paperwork Reduction  
5 for Farmers and H–2A Modernization Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. H-2A PROGRAM UPDATES.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 101(a)(15)(H) of the Im-  
8 migration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)(H))  
9 is amended—

1 (1) by striking “an alien (i)(b) subject to” and  
 2 inserting the following: “an alien—

3 “(i)(b) subject to”;

4 (2) by striking “or (ii)(a)” and all that follows  
 5 through “seasonal nature,” and inserting the fol-  
 6 lowing:

7 “(ii)(a) who has a residence in a foreign  
 8 country that the alien has no intention of aban-  
 9 doning and is coming temporarily to the United  
 10 States to perform agricultural labor or services  
 11 (as defined by the Secretary of Labor, by regu-  
 12 lation), of a temporary or seasonal nature, in-  
 13 cluding agricultural labor (as defined in section  
 14 3121(g) of the Internal Revenue Act of 1986),  
 15 agriculture (as defined in section 3(f) of the  
 16 Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (29 U.S.C.  
 17 203(f))), the pressing of apples for cider on a  
 18 farm, fish cutting and trimming, including  
 19 labor or services relating to landscaping and  
 20 groundskeeping, forestry- and conservation-re-  
 21 lated services, services relating primarily to the  
 22 cultivation, installation, and establishment of  
 23 horticultural commodities (without regard to  
 24 commodity source or location), labor as a year-  
 25 round equine worker, labor as a year-round live-

1 stock worker (including as a dairy, cattle, or  
 2 poultry worker), labor in aquaculture, and the  
 3 processing of wild seafood, and all other labor  
 4 that falls within Standard Occupational Classi-  
 5 fication Code 37–3000 (Grounds Maintenance  
 6 Workers), 45–0000 (Farming, Fishing, and  
 7 Forestry Occupations), or 45–4000 (Forest,  
 8 Conservation, and Logging Workers);” and

9 (3) by striking “(iii) having a residence in a  
 10 foreign country which he has no intention of aban-  
 11 doning who” and inserting the following:

12 “(iii) who has a residence in a foreign  
 13 country that the alien has no intention of aban-  
 14 doning and”.

15 (b) JOINT APPLICATION; DEFICIENCY REMEDY.—  
 16 Section 214(c)(1) of the Immigration and Nationality Act  
 17 (8 U.S.C. 1184(c)(1)) is amended—

18 (1) by inserting “(A)” after “(1)”; and

19 (2) by adding at the end the following:

20 “(B) Multiple employers may submit a joint petition  
 21 under subparagraph (A) to import aliens as non-  
 22 immigrants described in section 101(a)(15)(H)(ii)(a).  
 23 Upon the approval of such petition, each joint employer  
 24 shall be subject to the provisions under section 218 with  
 25 respect to each alien listed in such petition. If any indi-

vidual party to such a joint contract violates any condition for approval with respect to the application or provisions under section 218 with respect to each alien listed in such petition, after notice and opportunity for a hearing, the contract may be modified to remove the party in violation from the contract at no penalty to the remaining parties.

“(C) If a petition to import aliens as nonimmigrants described in section 101(a)(15)(H)(ii)(a) is denied or if the issuance of visas requested through such petition is delayed due to a problem with the petition, the Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services shall promptly notify the petitioner of the reasons for such denial or delay and provide the petitioner with reasonable time to remedy the problem.”.

(c) LABOR CERTIFICATION; STAGGERED EMPLOYMENT DATES.—Section 218(h) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1188(h)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(3) An employer that is seeking to rehire aliens as H–2A workers who previously worked for the employer as H–2A workers may submit a simplified petition, to be developed by the Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, in consultation with the Secretary of Labor, which shall include a certification that the employer maintains compliance with all applicable requirements with re-

1 spect to the employment of such aliens. Such petitions  
2 shall be approved upon completion of applicable security  
3 screenings.

4 “(4) An employer that is seeking to hire aliens as  
5 H–2A workers during different time periods in a given fis-  
6 cal year may submit a single petition to U.S. Citizenship  
7 and Immigration Services that details the time period dur-  
8 ing which each such alien is expected to be employed.

9 “(5) Upon receiving notification from an employer  
10 that the employer’s H–2A worker has prematurely aban-  
11 doned employment or has failed to appear for employment  
12 and such employer wishes to replace such worker—

13 “(A) the Secretary of State shall promptly issue  
14 a visa under section 101(a)(15)(H)(ii)(a) to an eligi-  
15 ble alien designated by the employer to replace that  
16 worker; and

17 “(B) the Secretary of Homeland Security shall  
18 promptly admit such alien into the United States  
19 upon completion of applicable security screenings.”.

20 **SEC. 3. ELECTRONIC FILING AND APPEALS SYSTEM FOR H–**  
21 **2A PETITIONS.**

22 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the  
23 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Labor  
24 shall establish a process for filing petitions for non-  
25 immigrant visas under section 101(a)(15)(H)(ii)(a) of the

1 Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C.  
2 1101(a)(15)(H)(ii)(a)) that ensures that—

3 (1) petitioners may file such petitions through  
4 the Department of Labor’s website;

5 (2) any software developed to process such peti-  
6 tions indicates to the petitioner any technical defi-  
7 ciency in the application before submission; and

8 (3) any petitioner may file such petition in a  
9 paper format if such petitioner prefers such format.

10 (b) REQUEST FOR EVIDENCE.—Section 218(h) of the  
11 Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended by section  
12 2(c), is further amended by adding at the end the fol-  
13 lowing:

14 “(6) If U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services  
15 issues a Request for Evidence to an employer—

16 “(A) the employer may request such Request  
17 for Evidence to be delivered in an online format; and

18 “(B) if the employer makes the request de-  
19 scribed in subparagraph (A)—

20 “(i) the Request for Evidence shall be pro-  
21 vided to the employer in an online format; and

22 “(ii) not later than 10 business days after  
23 the employer submits the requested evidence  
24 online, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Serv-

1           ices shall provide an online response to the em-  
 2           ployer—

3                   “(I) indicating that the submitted evi-  
 4                   dence is sufficient; or

5                   “(II) explaining the reasons that such  
 6                   evidence is not sufficient and providing the  
 7                   employer with an opportunity to address  
 8                   any such deficiency.”.

9   **SEC. 4. SAFE HARBOR FROM PENALTIES FOR DOCUMENT**  
 10                   **FRAUD.**

11           Section 274C of the Immigration and Nationality Act  
 12   (8 U.S.C. 1324c) is amended—

13                   (1) by redesignating subsection (c) as sub-  
 14                   section (g) and moving such subsection so that it ap-  
 15                   pears immediately after subsection (f); and

16                   (2) by inserting after subsection (b) the fol-  
 17                   lowing:

18                   “(c) **SAFE HARBOR.**—Any employer that uses a  
 19                   third-party preparer to file an application for non-  
 20                   immigrant visas for workers the employer intends to hire  
 21                   shall not be subject to civil or criminal penalties under  
 22                   this section for errors or omissions on such application if  
 23                   the employer reasonably believed that the application was  
 24                   accurate and in compliance with all applicable statutory  
 25                   requirements.”.

1 **SEC. 5. RESETTling AND TEMPORARILY FREEZING THE AD-**  
2 **VERSE EFFECT WAGE RATES.**

3       Notwithstanding any other provision of law, including  
4 the final rule relating to Adverse Effect Wage Rate Meth-  
5 odology for the Temporary Employment of H-2A Non-  
6 immigrants in Non-Range Occupations in the United  
7 States (88 Fed. Reg. 12760 (February 28, 2023)), during  
8 the 3-year period beginning on the date of the enactment  
9 of this Act, the adverse effect wage rates applicable to  
10 nonimmigrants described in section 101(a)(15)(H)(ii)(a)  
11 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C.  
12 1101(a)(15)(H)(ii)(a)) in each State and occupational  
13 classification shall be equal to the rates that were in effect  
14 on January 1, 2023.

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