

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 66

Rep. Brixie offered the following resolution:

1 A resolution to urge the United States federal government to
2 take action to expand pathways for legal immigration, help Michigan
3 fill legal immigrant positions, and increase access to nonimmigrant
4 work visas.

5 Whereas, Migrant and seasonal farm workers are vital to
6 Michigan's agricultural and economic growth. It is estimated that
7 Michigan farmers employ approximately 46,000 migrant and seasonal
8 farm workers during peak season and 10,000 workers during non-peak
9 season; and

10 Whereas, The H-2A temporary agricultural workers program is a
11 federal program intended to help American farmers fill employment
12 gaps by hiring workers from other countries. Known as the H-2A visa
13 program, it allows farmers who cannot find labor to hire

1 nonimmigrant workers for seasonal or temporary work that lasts no
2 longer than one year. American farmers who want to participate in
3 the program must apply for and obtain temporary labor certification
4 for H-2A workers from the United States Department of Labor.
5 Prospective migrant workers must apply for H-2A visas and admission
6 to work in the United States. United States Citizen and Immigration
7 Services may extend migrant workers' H-2A classifications for
8 qualifying employment in increments of up to one year for a maximum
9 stay of three years. After three years, nonimmigrant workers must
10 depart and remain outside the United States for an uninterrupted
11 period of three months before seeking readmission as an H-2A
12 nonimmigrant; and

13 Whereas, There has been a steady increase in applications to
14 the H-2A visa program in recent years. The number of H-2A visa
15 applications has increased 157 percent in the past five years and
16 quadrupled in the last decade. In fiscal year 2022, the Department
17 of Labor certified 371,619 H-2A positions, an increase of 17
18 percent from fiscal year 2021 and an increase of nearly 100,000
19 positions from fiscal year 2020. In Michigan, the Great Lakes Ag
20 Labor Services (GLALS) reported a 50 percent increase in the number
21 of new clients requesting administrative support services to
22 utilize the H-2A visa program in 2022; and

23 Whereas, Michigan farmers rely on the H-2A visa program to
24 address labor shortages. Experts have cited numerous factors for
25 the farm worker labor shortage, including the dwindling rural
26 population spurred by growing opportunities away from the farm.
27 These factors are leaving a void in the workforce that cannot be
28 filled by United States citizens alone; and

29 Whereas, While the H-2A visa program helps to fill labor

1 shortages, the program has significant flaws that prevent it from
2 effectively achieving its purpose. Instead of having a consistent
3 workforce, farmers are forced to watch their workers repeatedly
4 renew their visas and leave the United States for months at a time.
5 Workers are at higher risk of suffering serious abuses, such as
6 paying exorbitant fees to labor recruiters, being underpaid and
7 overworked, discovering that the jobs they applied for do not
8 exist, and, in some instances, becoming victims of human
9 trafficking. Because employers control workers' visa statuses, many
10 workers feel powerless to defend and enforce their rights.
11 Expanding pathways to legal immigration would provide employers
12 with a consistent workforce and give workers a mechanism to protect
13 their rights; and

14 Whereas, The Farm Bill is due for renewal this year. Enacted
15 in 2018, the current Farm Bill provides support, certainty, and
16 stability to our nation's farmers, ranchers, and forest managers by
17 enhancing farm support programs, improving crop insurance,
18 maintaining disaster programs, and promoting and supporting
19 voluntary conservation. When it debates the Farm Bill this year,
20 Congress has the opportunity to take action to improve the H-2A
21 visa program and expand pathways for legal immigration; and

22 Whereas, Taking action to expand pathways for legal
23 immigration and work visas is an appropriate way to recognize
24 National Farm Workers Day and the dedication of the hired workforce
25 on America's farms. Celebrated annually on March 31st, National Farm
26 Workers Day pays tribute to the unsung heroes on America's farms:
27 the hired workforce that plays a pivotal role in bringing crops to
28 fruition and fresh produce to our tables. Employed on low wages,
29 they work day and night to ensure farmers can grow, maintain, and

1 harvest crops on a large scale; now, therefore, be it

2 Resolved by the House of Representatives, That we urge the
3 United States federal government to take action to expand pathways
4 for legal immigration, help Michigan fill legal immigrant
5 positions, and increase access to nonimmigrant work visas; and be
6 it further

7 Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the
8 President of the United States and the members of the Michigan
9 congressional delegation.