

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 17, 2013

The Honorable Tom Perez  
U.S. Department of Labor  
Frances Perkins Building  
200 Constitution Ave NW  
Washington DC, 20210

The Honorable John Kerry  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services  
20 Massachusetts Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Secretaries Kerry and Perez, and Director Mayorkas:

We are very concerned about the effect that the unfortunate shutdown of our government will have on our nation's domestic food production, as a result of the furloughing of employees involved in the processing of H-2A visa petitions for foreign agricultural workers.

We have heard from growers in multiple agricultural industries from across the country who fear that the shutdown of the H-2A visa process will prevent them from getting the workers that they need in this crucial harvest season, and that, as a result, crops will literally wither in the field for lack of workers to pick them, resulting in substantial economic losses, reduction of our domestic food supply, and higher prices to consumers.

Consequently, it is imperative that your agencies move as quickly as possible to expedite the processing of H-2A petitions and related certifications and approvals now that the shutdown has come to an end.

Representatives of agricultural employers, including Western Growers Association, the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association, and the American Farm Bureau Federation, have prepared the attached set of recommendations to speed up

the processing of H-2A petitions now that the government has re-opened. We respectfully urge you to give this your careful and swift consideration, and to take as many steps as you can to speed up the processing of H-2A petitions, so that we can minimize the harm that is inflicted upon U.S. growers and consumers from the shutdown.

Thank you for your urgent attention to this matter.

Sincerely yours,

Dianne Feinstein Chris Hatch

Peter Leahy Chuck Schumer

Heidi Heitkamp Mark F. Rubio

Liz Han Sayby Chaudhri

Bill Nelson Johnny Isakson

Cc: Secretary of Agriculture Thomas Vilsack