

115TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 641

To reform the H-2A program for nonimmigrant agricultural workers, and  
for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 24, 2017

Mr. ALLEN (for himself, Mr. BOST, Mr. CARTER of Georgia, Mr. CRAMER,  
Mr. MESSER, and Mr. RICE of South Carolina) introduced the following  
bill; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

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## A BILL

To reform the H-2A program for nonimmigrant 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—

5               (1) the “Better Agriculture Resources Now  
6       Act”; or

7               (2) the “BARN Act”.

8       **SEC. 2. H-2A PROGRAM REFORMS.**

9               (a) DEFINITION OF AGRICULTURAL LABOR OR SERV-  
10       ICES.—Section 101(a)(15)(H)(ii)(a) of the Immigration

1 and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)(H)(ii)(a)) is  
2 amended—

3 (1) by striking “Secretary of Labor” and in-  
4 serting “Secretary of Agriculture”;

5 (2) by striking “and the pressing” and insert-  
6 ing “the pressing”; and

7 (3) by striking “of a temporary” and all that  
8 follows through the end and inserting “, and the  
9 handling, planting, drying, packing, packaging, proc-  
10 essing, freezing, grading, storing, or delivering to  
11 storage or to market or to a carrier for transpor-  
12 tation to market, in its unmanufactured state, any  
13 agricultural or horticultural commodity, or”.

14 (b) ADMINISTERING OFFICIAL.—Section 218 of such  
15 Act (8 U.S.C. 1188) is amended by striking “Secretary  
16 of Labor” each place such term appears and inserting  
17 “Secretary of Agriculture”.

18 (c) DEEMED APPROVAL.—Section 218(c)(3)(A) of  
19 such Act (8 U.S.C. 1188(c)(3)(A)) is amended by insert-  
20 ing before “In considering” the following: “The Secretary  
21 of Agriculture shall review such application and shall pro-  
22 vide a determination on the application within 15 days of  
23 the date of the filing of the application. If the Secretary  
24 does not comply with the deadline in the preceding sen-  
25 tence, the application shall be deemed approved.”.

1           (d)           EXPERIENCE           REQUIREMENT.—Section  
2 218(c)(3)(A) of such Act (8 U.S.C. 1188(c)(3)(A)), as  
3 amended by subsection (b), is further amended by adding  
4 at the end the following: “A job offer may contain an expe-  
5 rience requirement as long as work performed in an illegal  
6 status may not be counted towards such requirement.”.

7           (e) ELIMINATION OF 50-PERCENT RULE.—Section  
8 218(c)(3) of such Act (8 U.S.C. 1188(c)(3)) is amended—

9                   (1) by striking “(A)”; and

10                   (2) by striking subparagraph (B).

11           (f) WAGE RATE.—Section 218(a)(1)(B) of such Act  
12 (8 U.S.C. 1188(a)(1)(B)) is amended by striking the pe-  
13 riod at the end and inserting “, except that no employer  
14 shall be required to pay a wage rate greater than 115 per-  
15 cent of the greatest of the Federal and State minimum  
16 wage rates.”.

17           (g) DEADLINE FOR FILING APPLICATIONS.—Section  
18 218(c)(1) of such Act (8 U.S.C. 1188(c)(1)) is amended  
19 by striking “45” and inserting “30”.

20           (h) PERIOD OF AUTHORIZED NONIMMIGRANT STA-  
21 TUS.—Section 218(h) of such Act (8 U.S.C. 1188(h)) is  
22 amended by adding at the end the following:

23           “(3) The initial period of authorized status as a non-  
24 immigrant described in section 101(a)(15)(H)(ii)(a) shall  
25 not exceed 1 year. Such period may be extended once by

1 the Secretary of Homeland Security for a period of up  
2 to 1 year, except that such extension may be granted only  
3 if the Secretary of Agriculture determines that the em-  
4 ployer has engaged in the positive recruitment efforts de-  
5 scribed in subsection (b)(4) (including the obligation to  
6 circulate the employer’s job offer through the interstate  
7 employment service system). In the case of a non-  
8 immigrant who has remained in the United States for the  
9 full 2-year period, the nonimmigrant shall be obliged to  
10 depart the United States and shall not be eligible to re-  
11 apply for a visa to re-enter the United States as such a  
12 nonimmigrant for a period of 2 months. If at any time  
13 during a period of authorized admission the alien has a  
14 work lapse period of 60 days or more, the visa of the alien  
15 shall be deemed revoked and the alien shall be required  
16 to depart from the United States, except that if an em-  
17 ployer has applied for a certification under subsection  
18 (a)(1) with respect to an alien who has a work lapse of  
19 60 days or less, such period shall not begin until after  
20 the Secretary has made a determination on the application  
21 consistent with subsection (c).”.

22 (i) HOUSING.—Section 218(c)(4) of such Act (8  
23 U.S.C. 1188(c)(4)) is amended to read as follows:

24 “(4) HOUSING REQUIREMENT.—

1 “(A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided  
2 under subparagraph (F), each employer apply-  
3 ing for workers under subsection (b) shall offer  
4 to provide housing at no cost to—

5 “(i) all workers in job opportunities  
6 for which the employer has applied; and

7 “(ii) all other workers in the same oc-  
8 cupation at the same place of employment  
9 whose place of residence is beyond normal  
10 commuting distance.

11 “(B) COMPLIANCE.—An employer meets  
12 the requirement under subparagraph (A) if the  
13 employer—

14 “(i) provides the workers with housing  
15 that meets applicable Federal standards  
16 for temporary labor camps; or

17 “(ii) secures housing for the workers  
18 that—

19 “(I) meets applicable local stand-  
20 ards for rental or public accommoda-  
21 tion housing, or other substantially  
22 similar class of habitation; or

23 “(II) in the absence of applicable  
24 local standards, meets State stand-  
25 ards for rental or public accommoda-

1                   tion housing or other substantially  
2                   similar class of habitation.

3                   “(C) INSPECTION.—

4                   “(i) REQUEST.—At the time an em-  
5                   ployer that plans to provide housing de-  
6                   scribed in subparagraph (B) to H-2A  
7                   workers files an application for H-2A  
8                   workers with the Secretary of Agriculture,  
9                   the employer shall request a certificate of  
10                  inspection by an approved Federal or State  
11                  agency.

12                  “(ii) INSPECTION; FOLLOWUP.—Not  
13                  later than 28 days after the receipt of a re-  
14                  quest under clause (i), the Secretary of Ag-  
15                  riculture shall ensure that—

16                         “(I) such an inspection has been  
17                         conducted; and

18                         “(II) any necessary followup has  
19                         been scheduled to ensure compliance  
20                         with the requirements under this  
21                         paragraph.

22                         “(iii) DELAY PROHIBITED.—The Sec-  
23                         retary of Agriculture may not delay the ap-  
24                         proval of an application for failing to com-

1           ply with the deadlines set forth in clause  
2           (ii).

3           “(D) RULEMAKING.—The Secretary of Ag-  
4           riculture shall issue regulations that address  
5           the specific requirements for the provision of  
6           housing to workers engaged in the range pro-  
7           duction of livestock.

8           “(E) HOUSING ALLOWANCE.—

9           “(i) AUTHORITY.—If the Governor of  
10          a State certifies to the Secretary of Agri-  
11          culture that there is adequate housing  
12          available in the area of intended employ-  
13          ment for migrant farm workers and H-2A  
14          workers who are seeking temporary hous-  
15          ing while employed in agricultural work, an  
16          employer in such State may provide a rea-  
17          sonable housing allowance instead of offer-  
18          ing housing pursuant to subparagraph (A).  
19          An employer who provides a housing allow-  
20          ance to a worker shall not be required to  
21          reserve housing accommodations for the  
22          worker.

23          “(ii) ASSISTANCE IN LOCATING HOUS-  
24          ING.—Upon the request of a worker seek-  
25          ing assistance in locating housing, an em-

1           ployer providing a housing allowance under  
2           clause (i) shall make a good faith effort to  
3           assist the worker in identifying and locat-  
4           ing housing in the area of intended em-  
5           ployment.

6           “(iii) LIMITATION.—A housing allow-  
7           ance may not be used for housing that is  
8           owned or controlled by the employer. An  
9           employer who offers a housing allowance to  
10          a worker, or assists a worker in locating  
11          housing which the worker occupies under  
12          this subparagraph shall not be deemed a  
13          housing provider under section 203 of the  
14          Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker  
15          Protect Act (29 U.S.C. 1823) solely by vir-  
16          tue of providing such housing allowance.

17          “(iv) OTHER REQUIREMENTS.—

18                 “(I) NONMETROPOLITAN COUN-  
19                 TY.—If the place of employment of  
20                 the workers provided an allowance  
21                 under this subparagraph is a non-  
22                 metropolitan county, the amount of  
23                 the housing allowance under this sub-  
24                 paragraph shall be equal to the state-  
25                 wide average fair market rental for



1 existing housing for nonmetropolitan  
2 counties for the State, as established  
3 by the Secretary of Housing and  
4 Urban Development pursuant to sec-  
5 tion 8(c) of the United States Hous-  
6 ing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(c)),  
7 based on a 2-bedroom dwelling unit  
8 and an assumption of 2 persons per  
9 bedroom.

10 “(II) METROPOLITAN COUNTY.—

11 If the place of employment of the  
12 workers provided an allowance under  
13 this subparagraph is in a metropolitan  
14 county, the amount of the housing al-  
15 lowance under this subparagraph shall  
16 be equal to the statewide average fair  
17 market rental for existing housing for  
18 metropolitan counties for the State, as  
19 established by the Secretary of Hous-  
20 ing and Urban Development pursuant  
21 to section 8(c) of the United States  
22 Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C.  
23 1437f(c)), based on a 2-bedroom  
24 dwelling unit and an assumption of 2  
25 persons per bedroom.

1                   “(v) INFORMATION.—If the employer  
2                   provides a housing allowance to H-2A em-  
3                   ployees, the employer shall provide a list of  
4                   the names and local addresses of such  
5                   workers to the Secretary of Agriculture  
6                   and the Secretary of Homeland Security  
7                   once per contract period.”.

8           (j) LEGAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE LEGAL SERVICES  
9   CORPORATION.—Section 218(h) of such Act (8 U.S.C.  
10 1188(h)), as amended by subsection (g), is further amend-  
11 ed by adding at the end the following:

12           “(4)(A) The Legal Services Corporation may not pro-  
13 vide legal assistance for, or on behalf of, any alien, and  
14 may not provide financial assistance to any person or enti-  
15 ty that provides legal assistance for, or on behalf of, any  
16 alien, unless—

17                   “(i) the alien is present in the United States at  
18                   the time the legal assistance is provided; and

19                   “(ii) the parties to the dispute have attempted,  
20                   in good faith, mediation or other non-binding dis-  
21                   pute resolution of all issues involving all such par-  
22                   ties.

23           “(B) If an employer and a nonimmigrant having sta-  
24 tus under section 101(a)(15)(H)(ii)(a) have an arbitration

1 arrangement, the Legal Services Corporation shall respect  
2 the arbitration process and outcome.

3 “(C) No employer of a nonimmigrant having status  
4 under section 101(a)(15)(H)(ii)(a) shall be required to  
5 permit any recipient of a grant or contract under section  
6 1007 of the Legal Services Corporation Act (42 U.S.C.  
7 2996f), or any employee of such a recipient, to enter upon  
8 the employer’s property, unless such recipient or employee  
9 has a pre-arranged appointment with a specific non-  
10 immigrant having such status.”.

11 (k) EFFECT OF VIOLATIONS WHILE IN UNITED  
12 STATES.—Section 218(f) of such Act (8 U.S.C. 1188(f))  
13 is amended to read as follows:

14 “(f) EFFECT OF VIOLATIONS.—

15 “(1) OVERSTAYS.—An alien may not be admit-  
16 ted to the United States as a nonimmigrant having  
17 status under section 101(a)(15)(H)(ii)(a) if the alien  
18 was admitted to the United States as such a non-  
19 immigrant within the previous 5-year period and the  
20 alien remained after the alien’s period of authorized  
21 admission expired or otherwise violated a term or  
22 condition of such previous admission.

23 “(2) FRAUD.—An alien may not be admitted to  
24 the United States as a nonimmigrant having status  
25 under section 101(a)(15)(H)(ii)(a) if the alien was

1 admitted to the United States as such a non-  
2 immigrant on the basis of fraud.

3 “(3) OTHER CRIMES.—An alien may not be ad-  
4 mitted to the United States as a nonimmigrant hav-  
5 ing status under section 101(a)(15)(H)(ii)(a) if the  
6 alien was admitted to the United States as such a  
7 nonimmigrant and committed an offense that ren-  
8 dered the alien deportable while in the United States  
9 pursuant to such admission.

10 “(4) EMPLOYER BAR.—The Secretary of Agri-  
11 culture may not issue a certification under sub-  
12 section (a) with respect to an employer if the Sec-  
13 retary finds, after notice and an opportunity for a  
14 hearing, that the employer knowingly hired an H-2A  
15 worker whose period of authorized admission had ex-  
16 pired or that the employer otherwise engaged in  
17 fraud or misrepresentation with respect to the pro-  
18 gram for the admission of such workers into the  
19 United States. The Secretary of Homeland Security  
20 shall not thereafter approve petitions filed by such  
21 employer under section 214(c). An employer that es-  
22 tablishes that it has complied in good faith with the  
23 requirements of this Act has established an affirma-

- 1       tive defense in an action brought under this para-
- 2       graph.”.

