Agricultural Workers Program (AWP) “Blue Card” Bill

Background

The “Agricultural Workers Program (AWP) has been introduced in both the Senate (S175) and the House (HR 641). It is a proposed solution to adjust the status of undocumented farm workers and their immediate families. Republicans and Democrats supported a similar proposal in 2013, because it is a fair solution to the problem of shortages in farm labor, and the reality that more than half of farm workers are undocumented, but it was not passed.

If passed, this legislation would alleviate the constant fear of detention and deportation that farm workers currently face by offering farm workers and their families an opportunity to gain legal immigration status. With legal status and a path to citizenship farm workers would be better able to improve their wages and working conditions. This bill would also ensure a stable workforce for employers and a secure and safe food system for consumers. It keeps the oversight of labor rights in the Department of Labor.

Blue Card status allows for temporary residency and legal employment. It also allows one to travel outside the U.S. and have the ability to return. To qualify for the Blue Card status a worker must:

- Work for 100 days (in total) in the last 2 years to qualify for a pathway to citizenship
- Pay for an application and a $100 fine
- Pass a background check and meet other requirements

The work permit provides protection for the workers and their immediate family members from deportation.

Finally, workers can seek Green Card status (residency) by doing one of the following:

- Option A: Continue working in the fields for 100 days each year for 5 years
- Option B: Continue working in the fields for 150 days each year for 3 years
- Can now qualify to become a legal permanent resident
- Pay for application and $400 fine

After paying the application and $400 fine workers are on the pathway to citizenship.
National Farm Work Ministry, farm worker organizations and allies are advocating for the passage of the Agricultural Workers Program Act as a step toward addressing our very broken immigration system.

Take Action

Join us by visiting your Senators and Representative in their home districts or in Washington, D.C. If you cannot visit your legislators, please call, write or email them. Personal contact with your legislator is the most effective way to get them to act and we ask you make that effort. If that is not possible, utilize the Email Action set up by the United Farm Workers.

Check to see if your Senators and Representatives are current co-sponsors. Senators and House of Representatives.

Message

Ask them to: “Please support the Agricultural Worker Program Act of 2019 (in the House, HR 641 and in the Senate, S. 175).”

If they are already a cosponsor: “Thank you for your support of the Agricultural Worker Program Act of 2019 (in the House, HR 641 and in the Senate, S 175).

The Agricultural Worker Program Act recognizes the valuable role and contributions of farm workers. The bill is important for farm workers because it would take away the constant fear of deportation and allow families to stay together. This bill would also ensure a stable workforce for employers and a secure and safe food system for consumers.

The Agricultural Worker Program Act would help address the current immigration crisis in agriculture by providing experienced farm workers with a path to temporary immigration status, followed by an opportunity to earn lawful permanent residency through continued work in agriculture.

Share it!

In addition to contacting your legislators, consider posting/sharing this Action Alert on Facebook and Twitter. Connect to the NFWM Action Alert (web link to be added) and share widely. We really need your help. Now is the time to turn out for farm workers.

And let us hear from you too. Tag us @nfwministry, email us, tell us what happened. If you visit in person, be sure to have your photo made with your legislator and post it on social media or send it to us and we will share it. Along with the photo, post, “Asking/Thanking my representative (add the name of the legislator) to co-sponsor the Agricultural Worker Act of 2019.”