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ALMOST 100 PERCENT OF CA MEMBERS SURVEYED SUPPORT HIRING OF LEGAL FOREIGN WORKERS FOR AGRICULTURE JOBS

FERGUS FALLS, Minn. – Based on a recent survey, more than 99 percent of the members of Communicating for America (CA) and its subsidiary, Communicating for Agriculture Exchange Program (CAEP), support the hiring of legal foreign workers for U.S. agriculture jobs, and more than 96 percent support changes in the visa program to allow workers to remain on the job longer.

“All areas of agriculture have seen the need for additional labor, and American workers have not been able to fulfill that need,” said Wayne Nelson, CA president. “This is not an immigration issue, it is a labor issue. These workers are here for a limited time, work hard and then return to their home countries.”

Nelson said that CAEP is a subsidiary of CA that helps members find agriculture workers through the H2A guest worker program. He said one of the problems with this program is the 10-month limitation on visas because they fall into the temporary visa category.

“The temporary designation was set more than 30 years ago, and today agriculture has changed so that there are not as many jobs that fit this description,” said Nelson. “What used to be labor needed just for the harvest season has now turned into a need for workers all year long.”

Nelson said that more than 96 percent of those responding to the survey support an amendment by Congress that would make it easier for foreign workers to come to America legally, such as extending the H2A visa to 12 months.

“By making things more streamlined for foreign workers to gain entry, you will actually cut down on immigration and entry to the United States,” said one of the survey respondents. “My foreign workers all maintain homes in their native countries, pay U.S. taxes and Social Security through payroll deductions, and are law-abiding visitors.”

“We live in a rural area,” said another of the respondents, “with limited population and have a large seasonal business. The unemployment rate is very low, and finding people willing to do physical labor is nearly impossible for only a few months a year.”

“This is a great opportunity for us and legal foreign workers to expand the international horizons of the agricultural business,” said another respondent. “The educational and cultural interactions are extremely valuable to building a professional society that can adapt to any situation and excel in the global economy.”

And, another said, “The foreign workers we have hosted have been a huge asset to our business. They are willing and able to do jobs that we cannot fill easily with American workers. The ability to have foreign workers enables our business and makes it more successful.”

Communicating for America is a 35-year-old national association made up of farmers and small businesses all across rural America. For more information on CA, visit the Web site at www.cabenefits.org.

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