



January 13, 2015

Dear Representative:

Farmworker Justice writes to urge you to oppose anti-immigrant amendments to H.R. 240, the appropriations bill for the Department of Homeland Security. These amendments should be opposed because they seek to prevent the administration from implementing President Obama's immigration executive actions that are urgently needed to address our broken immigration system in the absence of Congressional action. Farmworker Justice is a national organization that promotes fairness toward immigrant farmworkers.

Included in the executive actions are the DACA and DAPA programs, which are sensible, albeit very limited, efforts to address the broken immigration system that is harming immigrants, employers, and the nation. A majority of agricultural workers, the people who labor in dangerous low-paid jobs on our farms and ranches, are undocumented. Many of these undocumented farmworkers are vulnerable to abuse and live in fear of detection, job loss, and deportation.

The President's deferred action programs will allow eligible residents who lack authorized immigration status to come forward, submit to background checks and properly document themselves with the federal government and in their workplaces. Those undocumented immigrants who qualify will obtain a temporary relief from deportation and temporary work authorization. With protection against the constant fear of deportation, farmworkers and other aspiring Americans will be able to contribute more fully to their communities and will be empowered in their workplaces.

The President's actions are a prudent and proper exercise of his authority to enforce immigration laws. Since the 1950s, every President, including both Republican and Democratic Presidents, has used his authority to grant temporary immigration relief to groups of individuals without status. As part of the President's enforcement authority, he can and must set priorities, target resources, and shape how laws are to be implemented. Within that responsibility, the President has discretionary authority to execute the laws in a manner that most effectively utilizes limited resources, including through the use of prosecutorial discretion. The deferred action programs in combination with the Department of Homeland Security's new enforcement priorities will better enable Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Patrol to target their resources towards serious criminals and recent border crossers. This will result in an even more secure border than we have today.

Efforts in Congress to prevent the Administration from taking these modest steps should be rejected not only because the President possesses the authority for these sensible steps, but because the Administration's efforts are humanitarian in nature and are sensible steps to address our broken immigration system.

We commend President Obama's action to address our broken immigration system. The President took action because Congress has refused to address the urgent need for comprehensive immigration reform. In 2013, the Senate passed a comprehensive immigration bill that included a carefully negotiated compromise regarding agricultural workers and employers. Unfortunately, the House failed to act. These proposed amendments move in the fundamentally wrong direction. Rather than roll back the President's actions, the House should advance immigration legislation that includes a path to citizenship.

For these reasons stated above, Farmworker Justice urges you to vote NO on the proposed amendments to the DHS appropriations bill that would interfere with the President's executive action on immigration.

Sincerely,

Adrienne DerVartanian
Director of Immigration and Labor Rights
Farmworker Justice