

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 30, 2015

The Honorable Thomas E. Perez

Secretary of Labor

U.S. Department of Labor

200 Constitution Ave. NW

Washington, DC 20210

RE: Extending Comment Period for Proposed H-2A Regulations

RIN 1205-AB70

Dear Secretary Perez:

We respectfully request that the Department of Labor (DOL) issue a 60-day extension to the comment period for its proposed rule to revise the H-2A “special procedures” program for sheepherding, goat herding, and open range livestock, which is crucially important to agricultural employers and rural communities across the West.

DOL is proposing massive changes to longstanding special procedures for H-2A temporary agriculture workers that threaten to put family ranches out of business and cripple our domestic livestock industry following an order from the D.C. Circuit Court.

A number of herding employers, including range producers of livestock and sheep, rely on the H-2A special procedures program to obtain essential labor through legal channels. Some family ranchers have used a version of this program since the 1950s, and many have used H-2A special procedure workers since the late 1980s. The rules applicable to this program are critical to key sheep and wool industries across the nation. Because agricultural producers often have to tend to their duties and responsibilities in the field, our constituents do not always have an opportunity to respond promptly. Given the impact this proposal could have on our constituents, the public should have more time to comment on this rulemaking. A 60-day extension will help facilitate more substantial comments for the DOL.

The proposed H-2A special procedures regulation was published on April 15, 2015, and spanned 45 pages in the Federal Register, but only has a 30-day comment period. Given the complex topic and significant changes advanced by DOL, we do not believe that interested parties will have a meaningful opportunity to participate in the rulemaking process unless the comment period is extended to 90 days.

Thank you for your immediate attention and assistance with request.

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Sincerely,

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