



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

News Release

UNITED STATES AND GUATEMALA SIGN JOINT AGREEMENT TO IMPROVE H-2 VISA PROGRAM OPERATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, the U.S. Government, through efforts of the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala City, signed an updated bilateral cooperative agreement with Guatemala to facilitate increased transparency, accountability and worker safety in the H-2 nonimmigrant visa programs for temporary workers from Guatemala.

“Today’s announcement is another important step in our enduring partnership with Guatemala,” said Assistant Secretary for Employment and Training John Pallasch. “Our actions today will strengthen the economies of both nations, reinforce protections for American workers, provide safety for temporary workers, and discourage illegal immigration. Our economy is rapidly growing again with more than 10 million Americans returning to work in the last four months. This agreement will help American farmers get food to the marketplace and help seasonal American businesses keep up with increasing demand.”

“Today we celebrate our continued partnership with Guatemala to create prosperity and address the drivers of illegal migration,” said U.S. Ambassador to Guatemala Luis Arrega. “Guatemala is currently the third-largest H-2 sending country in the world, and this agreement will pave the way for even more Guatemalans to benefit from these opportunities. Guatemalans participating in the H-2 visa program can legally work in the United States on a temporary basis and bring their wages home to their families and communities, ensuring a legal alternative to the dangers of illegal immigration.”

Through this agreement, the Guatemalan Ministry of Labor will provide additional safeguards for temporary workers by registering Guatemalan workers for possible employment in the U.S. and offering free recruitment and selection services for U.S. employers. The agreement will complement existing U.S. laws and strengthen the protections for U.S. workers as well as prospective Guatemalan H-2 workers by ensuring Guatemalan H-2 workers are less susceptible to criminal actors and are not charged excessive fees as part of the H-2 nonimmigrant visa programs, potentially undercutting U.S. workers.

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The H-2A nonimmigrant visa program allows U.S. agricultural employers to hire seasonal workers from 85 eligible countries after the U.S. employer demonstrates that there are not sufficient, able, willing and qualified U.S. workers available at the time and place of need, and the employment of foreign workers will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of workers in the U.S. employed similarly.

Similar to the H-2A nonimmigrant visa program, the H-2B nonimmigrant visa allows U.S. employers to hire seasonal workers for nonagricultural employment from 85 eligible countries after the U.S. employer demonstrates that there are not sufficient qualified U.S. workers available at the time and place of need and the employment of foreign workers will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of U.S. workers similarly employed. All H-2 nonimmigrant workers are vetted by the Departments of Homeland Security and State prior to entering the U.S.

The mission of the Department of Labor is to foster, promote and develop the welfare of the wage earners, job seekers and retirees of the United States; improve working conditions; advance opportunities for profitable employment; and assure work-related benefits and rights.

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