



March 7, 2019

The Honorable Kirstjen Nielsen
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Alex Acosta
Secretary
Department of Labor
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Secretary Nielsen and Secretary Acosta:

The National Roofing Contractors Association (NRCA) strongly urges you to move forward expeditiously to provide additional visas for the H-2B seasonal worker program for 2019 in accord with the surging demand for workers in construction and other industries. The problem of workforce shortages in the roofing industry is reaching crisis proportions, and more H-2B visas are the only government policy tool currently available to help address this urgent matter.

Established in 1886, NRCA is one of the nation's oldest trade associations and the voice of professional roofing industry employers worldwide. NRCA's 3,600 member companies represent all segments of the industry including: contractors, manufacturers, distributors, consultants and other employers who employ more than 250,000 workers in all 50 states. NRCA members are typically small, privately held companies with the average member employing 45 people and attaining sales of about \$4.5 million per year.

As you know, the Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2019 (P.L. 116-6) provides the Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Secretary of Labor, with the authority to approve additional petitions for admission under the H-2B Nonimmigrant Temporary Worker program up to the new statutory level set in the law for the current fiscal year. It is our understanding that you may use this new authority to provide additional H-2B visas in accord with demand without further rulemaking, and I urge you to provide the maximum number of visas allowed by law as expeditiously as possible. As you know, demand for visas is so strong that the DOL's iCERT system was overwhelmed and crashed almost immediately when the application window opened on January 1. Decisive action on additional visas is vital to ensuring that seasonal businesses can obtain the workers they need for a successful 2019 in a timely manner.

Prompt action by the Dept. of Homeland Security and Dept. of Labor is crucial to addressing the workforce shortage situation in the roofing industry. The H-2B program is critical to many employers, including numerous NRCA members, who cannot find local workers to fill job openings during the busy summer season. The program provides an opportunity for businesses to operate at greater capacity during peak season, retain their full-time workers and contribute to their local and state economies. Seasonal workers help support many upstream and

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downstream jobs. In fact, every H-2B worker is estimated to create and sustain 4.64 American jobs, according to a study commissioned by Immigration Works USA and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Unfortunately, the program's annual 66,000 cap (33,000 for each half of the fiscal year) on visas is woefully inadequate to meet the demands of a growing economy and the lowest nationwide unemployment rate in a decade - only 4.1 percent. Given that the program is hugely oversubscribed, many employers will be shut out of obtaining the workers they need unless the Trump administration uses the new authority provided by Congress to issue additional visas according to economic demand. Without additional visas being made available, it will be much more difficult for roofing contractors to utilize the H-2B program in 2019, causing them to turn away customers and reduce the level of work for their American workers. For many employers this will cause irreparable harm to their business.

While the H-2B program is extremely costly and complicated for employers to use, many roofing contractors turn to it because it is the only way they can hire legal seasonal workers in today's labor markets. The program requires employers to undertake extensive recruitment of American workers, gain approval from government agencies and pay a premium wage, among other requirements.

Again, NRCA strongly urges you to use the new authority provided by Congress and move forward expeditiously to provide additional H-2B visas for 2019 in accord with the surging demand for workers in today's growing economy. This action is critical to sustaining economic growth in the roofing industry at this time.

Thank you for your careful consideration of NRCA's views on this important issue. If you have questions or need more information, please contact Duane Musser, NRCA's vice president of government relations, at 202-546-7584 or dmusser@nrca.net.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Reid Ribble". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Reid Ribble
Chief Executive Officer