



# Issue Brief



## H- 2B Reform

June 2019

### More H-2B Visas are needed:

- Congress provided authority to the DHS to increase the H-2B visa for FY 2019
- The H-2B cap has been reached for FY 2019
- Additional visas were released in May 2019. This may have been too late for some employers
- More visas are needed so employers can hire employees in a timely manner
- Congress must provide a permanent and meaningful cap relief for H-2B visa program in the FY 2020 DHS appropriations
- Seasonal workers are key to re-planting forest land and maintaining productive healthy forests for future generations

### Why FRA Supports H-2B Reform

- Seasonal guestworker reform is a top advocacy priority for FRA members.
- The forest products industry relies heavily on foreign guestworkers to supplement our U.S. workforce to sustain forests and manage vegetation. Because this work is usually seasonal, and because tree planting crews are itinerant without connection to a community, domestic workers are typically not interested in these jobs.
- The Congressionally mandated cap of 66,000 H-2B visas is inadequate to meet the labor needs of seasonal businesses.
- Demand currently exceeds the cap of 66,000 visas by 2-3 times.
- The final combined appropriations bill for fiscal year 2019, included discretionary language which gives the Department of Homeland Security authority to increase the H-2B visa cap for FY2019 from 66,000 to 135,320.
- In May 2019 30,000 additional H-2B visas were released for returning workers. The timing of the additional visas released may have been too late for tree planting in most of the U.S.
- Congress must provide permanent and meaningful H-2B cap relief in the FY 2020 appropriations legislation.

### **Request: The Department of Homeland Security should provide permanent and meaningful cap relief for the H-2B visa program in the FY 2020 appropriations**

#### **About FRA**

The Forest Resources Association (FRA) represents the interests of nearly 300 organizations and businesses in the forest products industry. Our members include forest landowners, suppliers, consuming mills, associated businesses, and state forestry associations.

The Mission of FRA is to promote the interests of forest products industry members in the economic, efficient, and sustainable use of forest resources in order to meet the needs of the wood fiber supply chain through private enterprise. FRA members are located in 48 states and 320 Congressional Districts.

#### **For more information, please contact:**

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