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March 8, 2016

The Honorable Thomas Perez
Secretary
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20210

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretaries Perez and Johnson:

I write to urge your agencies to work together to swiftly address the serious delays in the processing of H-2B visa applications. These delays are now affecting other visa programs, including H-2A visas, and are placing a significant burden on Colorado employers that depend on legal foreign workers.

Over 300 Colorado businesses rely on the H-2B visa program to hire temporary non-agricultural workers for seasonal jobs that are vital to Colorado's economy, including positions in recreation and hospitality, mining and construction, and landscaping services. Over the last year, I have heard consistently from Colorado businesses that are frustrated with the frequent changes and legal challenges to the H-2B program. These employers have nonetheless complied with the program's regulations even as additional requirements and interruptions have become increasingly burdensome.

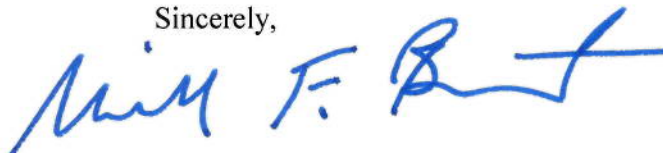
A year ago, I called on both of your agencies to resume processing of H-2B applications after a federal court decision prompted a halt to the program. I also wrote a letter with several Colorado business leaders to President Obama outlining the importance of the program in Colorado. While your agencies worked together to address the issues and resume the program, the new rules have created new burdens for H-2B employers.

I support efforts to improve the visa program to ensure that American workers are not overlooked and foreign workers are treated with respect. More importantly, I believe the best way to fix our broken guest worker program is through comprehensive immigration reform. The Senate bill, which I helped to craft and which passed in 2013, would have provided clear guidance in this area.

Throughout the last year, the employers' biggest frustration has been the lack of responsiveness from your agencies. I encourage you to do more to communicate directly with businesses in Colorado that use the program and are making a good faith effort to comply with U.S. law.

I hope that your respective departments will work to address these issues as quickly as possible to meet the demand of the rapidly approaching season. In the meantime, I'm happy to work with you to ensure that the H-2B program works for Colorado.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet
U.S. Senator