

July 27, 2011

The Honorable Lamar Smith
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
United States House of Representatives
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

We commend your leadership on the House Judiciary Committee, in particular the outreach you have extended to us to solicit ideas and proposals for an agricultural worker program. We have been providing our recommendations and provisions to you and your staff and have underscored the critical importance of incorporating these ideas into an agricultural worker program that is included in any E-Verify legislation.

We are deeply concerned that the committee appears on the verge of taking up H.R. 2164, the *Legal Workforce Act*, without including an agricultural worker program. As you know from discussions with our leadership, it is imperative that any mandatory E-Verify legislation incorporate provisions for a workable, efficient worker program that encompasses all of U.S. agriculture. If the committee imposes a new mandate on agricultural employers without providing them access to a legal supply of labor, the result will be devastating for U.S. agricultural producers. We have no doubt that farmers and ranchers from around the country, from every facet of agriculture, would vehemently oppose such a step.

The reasons are clear. Mandatory E-Verify legislation for farmers threatens \$5 to \$9 billion in annual U.S. agricultural production. This is wealth – in fruits, vegetables, dairy, livestock and other commodities – that will leave U.S. soil, be grown outside our country, then shipped to the U.S. by our competitors and sold to American consumers. But that is not all. When this U.S. production leaves, it puts at risk the two to three American jobs upstream and downstream of farm production that are supported by each farm worker. Thus, legislation mandating E-Verify for agriculture without provisions implementing an agricultural worker program will result in fewer U.S. jobs, a smaller U.S. agricultural sector, weaker rural communities, erosion of our nation's food security and a less vibrant economy.

This does not have to happen. The undersigned organizations, representing the breadth of U.S. agriculture, stand ready to work with you in crafting a program that will prevent the loss of American jobs and the export of billions of dollars of U.S. economic production to foreign competitors. It is critically important to all of us that H.R. 2164 include an effective agricultural worker program.

We look forward to working with you on this vital issue to U.S. agriculture.

Sincerely,

Agriculture Coalition for Immigration Reform
American Farm Bureau Federation.
American Frozen Food Institute
American Horse Council
American Mushroom Institute
American Nursery & Landscape Association
American Seed Trade Association
Dairy Farmers of America
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Christmas Tree Association
National Council of Agricultural Employers
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Grape Cooperative Association, Inc.
National Greenhouse Manufacturers Association
National Milk Producers Federation
National Potato Council
National Watermelon Association
North American Raspberry & Blackberry Association
OFA – The Association of Horticulture Professionals
Produce Marketing Association
Society of American Florists
Turfgrass Producers International
United Agribusiness League
United Fresh Produce Association
US Apple Association
USA Farmers
Welch's
Western Growers
Western United Dairymen
WineAmerica
Winegrape Growers of America
Agricultural Council of California
Agri-Mark Inc.
American AgriWomen
California Association of Winegrape Growers
California Canning Peach Association
California Farm Bureau Federation
California Grape and Tree Fruit League
California Strawberry Commission
CA Women for Agriculture
Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers
Dairylea Cooperative Inc.
Farm Credit East
Grower-Shipper Association of Central California
Florida Citrus Mutual

Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association
Idaho Dairymen's Association
Kansas Livestock Association
Michigan Apple Association
New England Apple Council
New York Corn and Soybean Growers Association
Nisei Farmers League
North Carolina Christmas Tree Association
Northeast Ag and Feed Alliance
Northeast Dairy Farmers Cooperatives
Northwest Farm Credit Services
Northwest Horticultural Council
Pacific Northwest Christmas Tree Association
Select Milk Producers, Inc.
Snake River Farmers Association
South East Dairy Farmers Association
South Texas Property Rights Association
St. Albans Cooperative Creamery
Sunmaid Growers
Texas Cattle Feeders Association
Texas Citrus Mutual
Texas Farm Bureau
Texas Nursery and Landscape Association
Texas & Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association
Texas Vegetable Association
Upstate-Niagara Cooperative Inc. (NY)
Ventura County Agricultural Association (CA)
Washington Growers League
Washington State Dairy Federation
Western Colorado Horticulture Society
Wisconsin Dairy Business Association
Yankee Farm Credit

cc: Members, House Judiciary Committee
House Leadership