

Rep. McDowell offered the following resolution:

House Resolution No. 183.

A resolution to memorialize the Congress of the United States to continue exempting returning workers allowed into this country under the H2B visa program by passing H.R. 1843.

Whereas, Seasonal workers are an essential component of the tourism and recreational industries of our state and nation. Even though thousands of young people use seasonal employment to begin their journey on the path to a career, many tourism areas do not have the populations necessary to fill all the seasonal jobs available. In Michigan, for example, Mackinac Island hires up to 4,500 seasonal workers each year. The island's 500 year-round residents cannot supply the workforce necessary for peak season employment levels; and

Whereas, Foreign workers supplement the seasonal staff needs in a host of our tourism and recreation destinations. Many of these employees are in our country under the H2B visa program; and

Whereas, All workers under the H2B visa program are here legally, are tracked by the federal government to ensure they are doing the work prescribed under their visa, and are paid under federally prescribed wage scales; and

Whereas, Recently, the Congress of the United States took action to help alleviate problems with the H2B visa program by capping the number of visas available at 66,000 but also exempting workers who already have H2B visas. This action ensured that there is enough of a workforce available for those industries that depend on seasonal workers; and

Whereas, Currently, there is a sunset in the law at the federal level that would remove the returning worker exemption. As of September 30, 2007, every returning worker would again be considered a new worker and be forced to apply under the 66,000 visa limit. This cap had been reached for each of the previous few years before Congress took action, just as the national economy has surged and more and more people are traveling. This cap also distorted hiring patterns across the nation, as employers are forced to put on workers far beyond service needs to help assure that they will have the employees they need when their season begins; and

Whereas, Legislation has been introduced in the Congress of the United States to revise the H2B visa program. The measure would extend the H2B returning worker exemption by removing the sunset language from current law. Clearly, this is an issue that needs prompt action; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives, That we memorialize the Congress of the United States to continue exempting returning workers allowed into this country under the H2B visa program by passing H.R. 1843; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, and the members of the Michigan congressional delegation.