

American Dairy Coalition: Sen. Johnson Releases Meaningful Reform for Desperate Farmers

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LAURIE FISCHER

920-366-1880

info@americandairycoalitioninc.com

The American Dairy Coalition applauds Senator Ron Johnson (R-WI), Chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, for introducing desperately needed legislation to secure workers to milk cows throughout the nation. The bill he introduced today is called the "State Sponsored Visa Pilot Program Act of 2017". The ADC has been diligently working with Senator Johnson on the introduction of this bill on behalf of our 35,000 dairy farmer members who are experiencing severe labor shortages throughout the country.

For years, farmers have tried to hire domestic workers, but they are simply not attracted to these jobs, even though starting pay has increased to \$13.00 - \$15.00 an hour plus benefit packages. It is critical for the dairy industry to have a means to utilize a legal workforce since current immigration visa programs are not available for dairy farms.

"Immigrants are not taking American jobs. These immigrants serve a crucial labor force needed to bolster our industry, and in turn, create additional jobs more appealing to our domestic workforce. Legalized immigrant labor allows dairy farm businesses to thrive and grow, providing opportunities for American citizens all the way through the supply chain." -Laurie Fischer, CEO of the American Dairy Coalition.

ADC appreciates the hard work of Senator Ron Johnson, who understands as the Chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, that the United States can stringently vet immigrants coming in to the U.S. to assure the safety of American citizens, while still allowing legal immigrants into the country. Senator Johnson's immigration reform policy provides a solution not only for producers to sustain their dairy businesses, but also to allow for the growth and expansion on dairy operations necessary to provide safe, nutritious and affordable dairy products for the world.

The State Sponsored Visa Pilot Program Act creates a nonimmigrant visa category, allowing states to sponsor foreign nationals who wish to perform services, provide investment, direct an enterprise, or otherwise contribute to the economic development of that state. The State Sponsored Visa Pilot Program Act of 2017 will provide:

States with the ability to voluntarily participate and they will be provided with a predetermined number of visas. Homeland Security will oversee the stringent vetting of all incoming immigrants.

All industries the ability to apply for visas, but each state that passes this program will determine which industries receive the designated visas based on the specific economic needs within that state.

Visas for low, medium, and high-skilled workers to participate for a period determined by the state, as long as it is not more than three years. Visas are renewable.

States to collaborate and enter "interstate compacts" for the joint administration of a state-based non-immigrant program.

ADC will continue to work diligently with Senator Johnson to establish bi-partisan support for this very important legal immigration reform tool.