

February 5, 2026

The Honorable John Thune
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader Thune, Speaker Johnson, Leader Schumer, and Leader Jeffries:

We, the undersigned Farm Bureaus, write on behalf of the farmers and ranchers we represent in every region of the country. No matter the commodity or state, many of our members repeatedly elevate one issue above all others - the need for meaningful action to fix the agricultural workforce situation. The shortage of qualified, skilled, and reliable employees is now the single greatest threat to agriculture and to the long-term stability and viability of our nation's food supply.

Growers in every sector are struggling to find the workforce needed to plant, cultivate, harvest, care for livestock, and meet food safety requirements. When farms and ranches cannot secure the labor they need, the results are felt far beyond rural communities. This ultimately affects healthy food availability, consumer prices, and the economic strength of the broader food supply chain.

The problem is growing more urgent each year. The Department of Labor's National Agricultural Workers Survey shows that most agricultural workers are foreign-born, and many lack a stable legal path to remain working in U.S. agriculture. Meanwhile, the national labor market remains exceptionally tight, with low unemployment, low labor force participation and limited interest in agricultural jobs from domestic workers. U.S. agriculture simply cannot meet its entire labor needs to sustain production under the current system.

Labor market challenges touch every part of the industry. Fruit and vegetable growers face fields of unharvested crops. Livestock, poultry and dairy operations struggle to maintain the continuous staffing required for animal care. Nursery and greenhouse operations rely on workers with specialized skills. Even conventionally seasonal industries like forestry, seed, and specialty crops need employees for tasks throughout the year, not just during one season. Our farmer and rancher members report rising labor costs, shrinking applicant pools, and shifting regulatory risks, all of which threaten the long-term viability of their farm businesses.

We recognize the significant progress made by the Trump Administration in reasserting control over the southern border. With historic reductions in illegal crossings and the end of mass interior

releases, Congress now has both the opportunity and the responsibility to address domestic workforce shortages in sectors essential to our nation's food security.

For years, farmers and ranchers have urged Congress to enact a practical, bipartisan solution that recognizes the realities of labor challenges in agriculture, with the President also expressing support for aiding our industry. Despite broad agreement among farmers, ranchers, and many lawmakers, no lasting reforms have been enacted by Congress in four decades. While we appreciate the regulatory actions being carried out by the Administration to address some of these concerns, these measures lack the long-term certainty that legislative solutions offer. As a result, farmers continue to face uncertainty, an increasingly unworkable labor system, and growing operational strain. We believe the moment to resolve this is now.

We respectfully ask Congress to lead in advancing agricultural workforce reforms by modernizing an outdated system that currently fails to meet the needs of a globally competitive U.S. agriculture sector. Provisions for successful reform must include streamlining the H-2A program, implementing safeguards against labor cost volatility, providing clear and consistent guidelines for family farms, stabilizing the current domestic workforce, and creating a workable system to verify future employees. Without these properly crafted and enforced solutions, we risk continuing the disturbing trend of losing U.S. family farms, wider agricultural trade deficits, and weakened national security. Food security contributes vitally to national security because a country that cannot feed its people is vulnerable.

In particular, we urge Congress to take immediate action on the following tenets of a complete solution for farmers and ranchers:

- **Address unsustainable cost escalation** by codifying and strengthening the U.S. Department of Labor's interim final rule on the Adverse Effect Wage Rate Methodology;
- **Meet all of agriculture's workforce needs** by broadening visa program eligibility for workers in nonseasonal agricultural sectors based on true market needs;
- **Provide certainty to the current workforce** by providing a pathway for eligible agricultural workers to gain legal work authorization consistent with the President's recent public comments¹; and,
- **Simplify rules and regulations for employers, workers, and agencies** by eliminating red tape, streamlining arcane processes, and setting uniform standards.

Farmers and ranchers have been waiting for a comprehensive workforce solution for decades. With a secure border, broad support among stakeholders, and growing bipartisan interest in finding a permanent fix, this is the best opportunity in a generation to enact reforms that will strengthen the nation's food supply, protect workers, and preserve rural communities.

We stand ready to work with Congress to discuss specific solutions and advance legislation that finally provides agriculture with the workforce security it needs.

¹ <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/trump-working-on-deportation-exemptions-for-illegal-farm-and-hospitality-workers>

Thank you for your leadership and for your continued support of America's farmers and ranchers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Zippy Duvall". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "Z" at the beginning.

Zippy Duvall
President