



Bill Analysis: The HIRE Act

Rep. Tony Gonzales (R-TX) introduced the H-2 Improvements to Relieve Employers (HIRE) Act ([H.R. 4708](#)) on July 18, 2023 with [15](#) original bipartisan cosponsors. The bill would reduce processing delays and streamline the [H-2A and H-2B](#) renewal processes. These improvements would likely help mitigate acute [labor shortages](#) across key industries in the U.S. and benefit employers and workers.

What Would the HIRE Act Do?

The HIRE Act contains two main provisions focusing on the H-2A and H-2B programs:

1. The bill would allow petitions, or certifications, for the H-2A and H-2B program filed on behalf of a temporary worker to be valid for a period of up to three years, as opposed to one year.
2. The bill would provide U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) with the direct statutory authority to waive in-person interviews for certain renewals of H-2A and H-2B visas.

How Does the HIRE Act Address Labor Shortages?

The HIRE Act would make it easier to recruit and retain workers in key U.S. industries that face acute labor shortages. The agricultural and food industries, in particular, [have been experiencing strained labor markets](#) for over a decade. While many factors contribute to these shortages, complicated and sometimes outdated immigration laws play a critical role. Without efforts to address significant labor shortages, the agricultural and food industries in particular could face reduced productivity and revenues for agricultural and food products. Ongoing worker shortages could also lead to incentivizing the offshoring of certain types of agricultural and food production and undermine U.S. food security.

The HIRE Act would help mitigate labor shortages by attracting and retaining legal immigrant farmworkers and other temporary workers. In allowing petitions for the H-2A and H-2B program to be valid for a period of up to three years and statutorily permitting USCIS to waive in-person interviews for renewals, the HIRE Act would address backlogs and help streamline the temporary worker visa process. In addition, through these changes to the work authorization period and the renewal process, the HIRE Act will incentivize the retention of workers for longer terms, providing increased certainty to employers and workers, while increasing the institutional knowledge and skill sets of the impacted workforces.

The U.S. is better positioned than most countries to mitigate labor shortages in key industries through common-sense policy changes. The HIRE Act represents such a set of relatively modest, but beneficial, changes to the H-2A and H-2B worker visa programs that would have positive results.