

House Joint Memorial 21

Sponsored by Representative WHISNANT

SUMMARY

The following summary is not prepared by the sponsors of the measure and is not a part of the body thereof subject to consideration by the Legislative Assembly. It is an editor's brief statement of the essential features of the measure **as introduced**.

Urges United States Department of Labor to review H-2B visa program certification process.

JOINT MEMORIAL

To the President of the United States and the United States Secretary of Labor:

We, your memorialists, the Seventy-sixth Legislative Assembly of the State of Oregon, in legislative session assembled, respectfully represent as follows:

Whereas the federal government owns 18.2 million acres of Oregon's 30 million acres of forestland; and

Whereas a recent study shows that many of the federally owned forests in Oregon are overcrowded and subject to devastating fires and insect infestations; and

Whereas management of these federally owned forests in Oregon is an ongoing process that involves a large workforce; and

Whereas the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 allows the United States Department of Labor to award contracts to companies under the H-2B visa program to use foreign labor on forestry jobs, even though the Act was largely intended to provide a short-term boost in United States employment; and

Whereas the United States Department of Labor has sole responsibility for oversight of H-2B visa workers; and

Whereas almost \$13 million in United States Forest Service contracts has been awarded to Oregon companies that use seasonal foreign workers under the H-2B visa program; and

Whereas Oregon's unemployment rate hovers around 10 percent, and the rate in some counties in central and eastern Oregon is much higher; and

Whereas under the H-2B visa program, contractors "self-attest" without providing documentation that they are unable to find local workers who are willing to work or are qualified for jobs; and

Whereas because there is such a high unemployment rate in Oregon, it is difficult to believe that companies are unable to find Oregon workers who are willing and able to work in the forests and must give the jobs to foreign workers instead; and

Whereas contracts for forestry jobs have been awarded to contractors that may not have complied with the intent of the federal regulations and may have illegally acquired H-2B foreign worker visa permits from the United States Department of Labor; now, therefore,

Be It Resolved by the Legislative Assembly of the State of Oregon:

That we, the members of the Seventy-sixth Legislative Assembly, urge the United States Department of Labor to ensure that no federal stimulus funds for federal forest management contracts

NOTE: Matter in **boldfaced** type in an amended section is new; matter *[italic and bracketed]* is existing law to be omitted. New sections are in **boldfaced** type.

1 be used to employ foreign labor and that H-2B visa certification rules be tightened to eliminate
2 abuse of the system; and be it further

3 Resolved, That a copy of this memorial shall be sent to the President of the United States, to
4 the United States Secretary of Labor and to each member of the Oregon Congressional Delegation.

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