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Senate amendment slashing temporary worker program risks repeating mistakes of 1986 immigration bill

The following statement was issued Wednesday, May 23, 2007 Mike Gilsdorf, president of the Colorado Employers for Immigration Reform:

Colorado Employers for Immigration Reform is very disappointed with the passage of an amendment to the Senate immigration reform bill that cuts in half the number of temporary workers allowed under a proposed "Y" visa general temporary worker program. The Bingaman Amendment strikes at the heart of the compromise announced last week. COEIR and other business organizations will work to see Senate reconsideration of this unfortunate action.

COEIR strongly supports the overall structure of the original compromise and a viable temporary guest worker program is an integral part of that compromise.

We feel the original 400,000 annual threshold with a market-based adjustment mechanism was appropriate. We fear that the new arbitrary lower threshold coupled with the removal of the ability to adjust it based on the needs of our economy seriously threatens the viability of the entire temporary visa program.

A critical flaw in the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act was the absence of a viable temporary guest worker program. Without a mechanism for employers to get the workers we need when U.S. workers are unavailable, Congress risks recreating the same disincentives and dysfunctions in the 1986 bill that led to the illegal immigration crisis we now are trying to fix.

COEIR will work with our delegation and other members of Congress to avoid repeating one the worst mistakes of the 1986 immigration bill which was the failure to provide sufficient legal channels for the economy to get the workers it needs.

Despite the H-2B visa program being burdensome, complicated and expensive, it is still vital as the only final option that allows seasonal employers can access employees. Instead of eliminating a proven and successful visa program, Colorado businesses are asking our nation's senators to ensure this groundbreaking

piece of legislation retains our ability to employ a legal, seasonal workforce in the numbers we need to keep our businesses open