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June 30, 2026

NCAE Applauds Introduction of Bipartisan Securing Agriculture's Workforce Act (SAWA) by Chairman Glenn "GT" Thompson

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The National Council of Agricultural Employers (NCAE) strongly supports the introduction of the *Securing Agriculture's Workforce Act* (SAWA) of 2026, a vital piece of bipartisan legislation championed by House Agriculture Committee Chairman Glenn "GT" Thompson (R-PA). If passed, SAWA would be the first major legislative effort in 40 years to comprehensively modernize the outdated H-2A Temporary Agricultural Worker Program, providing long-overdue stability to America's agricultural supply chain and safeguarding national food security.

"For decades, American farmers of all kinds have battled a broken, bureaucratic system just to secure the workforce needed to feed our nation, and the Securing Agriculture's Workforce Act finally seeks to provide the reform Farmers, Consumers, and our Economy needs," said John Hollay, President & CEO of the National Council of Agricultural Employers. "This bipartisan bill addresses head-on the exact challenges our organization and agricultural employers nationwide have focused on for years: expanding access for year-round sectors, implementing predictable cost controls, and streamlining the fractured program administration. We are incredibly grateful to Chairman Thompson for his visionary leadership and steadfast commitment to protecting American agriculture."

The H-2A program, which has not seen statutory updates since its inception in 1986, has struggled to keep pace with modern farming realities. Despite skyrocketing demand—growing from fewer than 100,000 certified positions in 2013 to nearly 400,000 in 2025 due to a persistent lack of domestic labor—the program has remained plagued by costly, burdensome regulations

and fractured agency oversight. SAWA steps in to fix these systemic flaws by expanding program access, introducing critical cost controls, and streamlining administrative hurdles.

NCAE members, alongside several producers representing agricultural organizations nationwide, joined Chairman Thompson and other agricultural leaders at the announcement of the Act on Capitol Hill earlier today.

Statements from NCAE Leadership & Agricultural Producers:

Maureen Torrey, Torrey Farms:

“As the senior member of a 12th generation family farm located in Western New York, we are so pleased with Chairman Thompson’s introduction of the H2A Reform bill, the Securing Agriculture’s Workforce Act. For many years we have struggled to find enough employees to work on our farm despite offering many benefits and a stable workplace.”

“This bill will help ensure that the next farm generation will have a secure workforce in order to succeed. Our farm cannot survive or operate without the dedicated hardworking people who work with us to till and harvest the crops and care for our dairy animals. Our rural town cannot survive either, without a strong agricultural base. Because of this legislation, our customers, including retail, wholesale, schools, and food banks will have reliable fresh food grown here in the USA.”

Jim Saunders, Saunders Brothers:

“We are a 4th generation family farm in its 111th year of growing fruits and plants. This is the best opportunity that I have seen in my 30-plus years of coming to Washington to advocate for Congress to help the American farm to provide the labor that we desperately need in order to harvest and provide fresh fruits, delicious vegetables and beautiful plants that our country wants and needs. Our country needs American produced foods, it is a matter of national security.”

Key Reforms of the Securing Agriculture's Workforce Act (SAWA):

- **Expanding Access:** The bill removes the restrictive and outdated "seasonal" requirement, shifting the program focus to the temporary nature of job contracts (up to 350 days). This finally opens H-2A eligibility to vital year-round sectors like dairy, mushrooms, and controlled environment agriculture. It also grants authority to the Secretary of Agriculture to define agricultural labor and creates a strict pathway for existing unauthorized agricultural workers to legally enter the program.
- **Controlling Costs:** SAWA brings much-needed wage stability by codifying the realistic, BLS-data-driven wage methodology of the 2025 Interim Final Rule (IFR). It implements a fair daily housing adjustment and prevents crippling, unpredictable wage spikes by capping annual fluctuations between a 3.5% increase and a 1.5% decrease. Compliance costs are further slashed through multi-year labor certifications and housing inspections.

- **Streamlining Operations:** To eliminate costly bureaucratic delays between the Departments of Labor, Homeland Security, and State, SAWA mandates a unified online platform for all agency and employer interactions. By clarifying agency roles and injecting commonsense flexibilities for dynamic farming needs, the bill protects growers from missing critical planting and harvest windows. These changes are critical to the proper functioning of the H-2A program for both current users, and newly eligible employers

NCAE calls on Congress to swiftly advance this bipartisan legislation to support our nation's farmers, ranchers, and consumers.

About the National Council of Agricultural Employers (NCAE):

Founded in 1964, NCAE is the only national association focusing exclusively on agricultural labor issues from the agricultural employer's viewpoint.

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