



US Spending Bill Could Increase Number of Temporary Foreign Workers in 2018

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The number of temporary foreign workers may grow in 2018, under the omnibus spending bill being considered by the U.S. Congress.

The \$1.3 trillion measure includes a provision that could increase the number of H2-B visas for non-farm workers allotted every year.

The bill specifies the number of visas can be increased if the Department of Homeland Security and the Labor Department determine the "needs of American businesses cannot be satisfied in fiscal year 2018 with United States workers."

CATO Institute immigration lawyer David Bier tweeted that the bill could "double the program." The current cap on H2-Bs is 66,000.

But Bier added, "The same lines were in last year's omni [bill] and DHS only raised the cap 15,000."

The H-2B program allows U.S. businesses to bring in foreign workers on a temporary basis if they can prove they cannot fulfill their staffing needs with U.S. labor.

In recent years, U.S. employers have been making greater use of it.

"Although the H-2B program has a quota, employers rarely reached it during the 1990s," Bier wrote in an op-ed for the *Dallas News*. "And several times since then Congress has temporarily increased the limit."

There is no cap to the number of visas — H-2As — allocated to temporary farm workers, "which has allowed for a steady expansion over two decades," Bier wrote.

His op-ed argues the spike in temporary visas has reduced illegal crossings at the U.S./Mexican border.

Opponents to temporary worker visas argue they take jobs away from American workers.

Increasing the number of H2-Bs was supported by Democrats and Republicans.