



MISSISSIPPI FARM BUREAU® FEDERATION

The Voice of Agriculture®

Mike McCormick
President

January 27, 2021

U.S. Senator Roger F. Wicker
555 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

U.S. Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith
702 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

U.S. Congressman Bennie Thompson
2466 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

U.S. Congressman Steven Palazzo
2349 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

U.S. Congressman Trent Kelly
2243 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

U.S. Congressman Michael Guest
230 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Members of the Mississippi Congressional Delegation:

On behalf of our members, many of whom depend on H-2A labor in producing commodities, we write to express deep concern for President Biden's January 25th Presidential Proclamation on the *Suspension of Entry as Immigrants and Non-Immigrants of Certain Additional Persons Who Pose a Risk of Transmitting Coronavirus Disease*. This proclamation proposes to limit or prohibit travel from certain countries, including some providing a significant number of H-2A workers, in particular South Africa. This change will impact approximately 800 workers from South Africa entering the U.S. just to work in Mississippi. We ask for your immediate help in ensuring these travel restrictions do not prohibit travel by H-2A workers who represent essential labor for an essential industry. If all travel, including H-2A workers, is prohibited from these countries, there will be severe consequences in food production due to labor shortages as there are no viable alternatives available for most employers on such short notice.

As many farms in Mississippi are now beginning to organize and launch their prepping and planting activities for the 2021 crop year, it is vital they have a workforce available to conduct the critical and essential labor that makes a crop happen. While we can appreciate the concern for further spread of the COVID-19 virus, including newer and potentially more severe variants, we believe such risks can be safely addressed without placing wholesale travel bans causing significant disruptions to the U.S. economy. We understand non-essential travel may need to be curtailed, but we'd ask for safe and workable protocols for H-2A workers who are essential to America's agriculture industry. Such protocols could include a plan for testing and quarantine. In addition, there may be a need to implement a vaccination program for this workforce or limitations to air services available for such travel.

We appreciate your consideration of our concerns, and we stand ready to help in your efforts to support the Mississippi agriculture industry on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike McCormick".

Mike McCormick
President