

**Protect Washington Farmworkers by Opposing HR 3227
Farm Workforce Modernization Act of 2025**

WHEREAS farmworkers are essential to Washington state's \$12.8 billion agricultural economy as neighbors and taxpayers¹; farm owners often have decades long relationships with farmworkers and describe them as "highly-skilled workers; 99% are solid, hardworking, productive individuals;"² and

WHEREAS the H-2A program, a federal program that allows employers to hire non-U.S. farmworkers if there aren't adequate local applicants, has avenues for exploiting farmworkers, HR 3227 harms both farmworkers and farmworker employers and is ineffectual to the program's abuses:

- Farmworker wage increases are limited for years³;
- Farmworker employers would be required to use Employment Eligibility Verification (E-Verify) to verify the citizenship status of workers pushing growers not to employ undocumented residents³, adversely affecting employers living in areas with poor or no internet access, or those not understanding the technology or having a dedicated staff to integrate E-Verify into their HR or payroll systems;⁴ employers could be forced to hire from the underground economy and E-Verify has a high failure rate identifying properly those not authorized to work;⁵
- H-2A workers are leveraged to displace local farmworkers (83% of farmworkers are local residents⁶) as charged by the Washington State's Attorney General Office;⁷ and weaponized for union busting - a union president described one northwest Washington employer applying for over 300 H-2A work visas and only after the commensurate local union workers showed up willing and able to work for the farmer did the employer withdraw the H-2A request⁸;
- H-2A workers face wage theft and poor housing⁹ as a result of lax enforcement - despite 70% of farmworker employers found violating farmworker laws when investigated, less than 1% of employers are investigated in any given year¹⁰;
- H-2A Workers who speak up or make formal complaints face retaliation and deportation¹¹;
- Farm-labor contractors are eligible employers in the H-2A program and could be the H-2A worker's employer, not the farmer, often operating outside the country with limited US government oversight and described as modern-day predators who operate with impunity that protect the growers from legal liability¹²; and

WHEREAS farm labor shortages caused by mass deportations of immigrant workers exacerbate labor shortages and increase reliance on the H-2A program¹³; and

WHEREAS the 2024 Washington State Democratic Party Platform states we should prevent exploitation of working people (Line 178 in the Business, Financial Services, Gaming & Trade Pillar) and also states America's economy depends on jobs that provide a fair and living wage, fair benefits, and safe working conditions for ALL workers (Line 953 in the Labor Pillar);

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the 42nd Legislative District Democratic Party and WSDCC support local farmworkers and oppose passage of HR 3227 Farm Workforce Modernization Act of 2025.

THEREFORE, BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the WSDCC, the Washington State's Democratic Congressional and Legislative Delegations and the Congressional Progressive Caucus.

Adopted by 42nd LD Democratic Party September 13, 2025.

- ¹ Agricultural Viability Study, Washington State Department of Agriculture, 2025 <https://agr.wa.gov/departments/directors-office/agricultural-competitiveness-and-business-viability-study>
- ² Public News Service, WA farmer calls for migrant worker protections, by Isobel Charle, Aug 12, 2025, <https://app.publicnewsservice.org/story/wa-farmer-calls-for-migrant-worker-protections/e8c725bb-cdfa-4c9e-aa1f-b8d4654ecd63>
- ³ Washington State Standard, Farmworkers' union fights to curb migrant H-2A visa expansion in Whatcom, Skagit Risa Schnebly, August 8, 2025 <https://washingtonstatestandard.com/2025/08/08/farmworkers-union-fights-to-curb-migrant-h-2a-visa-expansion-in-whatcom-skagit/#>
- ⁴ Farm Bureau, Emerging issue: agricultural workforce, April 9, 2025, <https://www.michfb.com/about/news-media/emerging-issue-agricultural-workforce#>
- ⁵ American Immigration Council, Mandatory E-Verify without Legalization Would Hamper Economic Recovery and Cost U.S. Workers Jobs, February 9, 2011 <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/fact-sheet/mandatory-e-verify-without-legalization/#>
- ⁶ United States Dept of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/farm-labor>
- ⁷ Washington State Office of the Attorney General News Release, AG Brown sues Toppenish grower for discriminating against Washington farmworkers and women, June 20, 2025, <https://www.atg.wa.gov/news/news-releases/ag-brown-sues-toppenish-grower-discriminating-against-washington-farmworkers-and#>
- ⁸ Community to Community Solidarity in Action Forum with the Union President of Familias Unidas por la Justicia Farmworkers Union, Mount Vernon, Washington, August 10, 2025
- ⁹ Public News Service, WA workers could be harmed by H-2A visa expansion by Isobel Charle, <https://www.publicnewsservice.org/2025-06-23/immigration/wa-workers-could-be-harmed-by-h-2a-visa-expansion/a97349-1>
- ¹⁰ Economic Policy Institute, Record-low number of federal wage and hour investigations of farms in 2022, by Daniel Costa and Philip Martin, Aug. 22, 2023 <https://www.epi.org/publication/record-low-farm-investigations/>
- ¹¹ Washington State Institute for Public Policy, The Needs of Farmworkers in Washington State Preliminary Report, December 2023, https://www.wsipp.wa.gov/ReportFile/1776/Wsipp_The-Needs-of-Farmworkers-in-Washington-State-Preliminary-Report_Report.pdf
- ¹² The [f]law – No Way to Treat a Guest, by Izza Drury, March 17, 2025, <https://theflaw.org/articles/no-way-to-treat-a-guest/>
- ¹³ Cascade PBS, Can Washington's agriculture survive on H-2A workers?, Renee Diaz, Feb. 18, 2025 <https://www.cascadepbs.org/news/2025/02/can-washingtons-agriculture-industry-survive-h-2a-workers/>