



## **News Release**

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### **House Judiciary Committee Passes E-Verify Bill, Rejects Agricultural Worker Amendment**

*Adding Agricultural Worker Provision to E-Verify Bill May Require Amendment by Full House*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The House Judiciary Committee passed legislation today mandating the use of E-Verify for all employers in the United States. Under the proposed Legal Workforce Act, introduced by committee Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas), employers must confirm all employees' eligibility through the federal E-Verify system. In passing the measure, the committee also rejected an agricultural worker amendment to the bill offered by Rep. Dan Lungren (R-Calif.), meaning that the legislation's final language will lack a provision for an agricultural workforce as it goes to the full House for passage.

"United Fresh strongly opposes any workforce legislation that does not include strong provisions for a practical agricultural worker program," said United Fresh Produce Association Senior Vice President of Public Policy Robert Guenther. "Without an agricultural worker program, this legislation threatens the viability of fruit and vegetable growers across the country, and will have a significant impact on the entire fresh produce marketing chain."

United Fresh has advocated over the last year for a comprehensive approach to E-Verify legislation including provisions for a practical, efficient worker program encompassing all of U.S. agriculture. Although the committee will later consider an agricultural worker proposal by Chairman Smith, its chances of success in the House are far from certain.

"We've pushed hard for the committee to take a practical look at the needs of agricultural employers, but not only did it reject the agricultural worker provision, it stripped language from the bill protecting the ag sector, making the bill even more damaging," Guenther added.

Now that the Legal Workforce Act has been passed by the committee, the last opportunity to amend the bill comes on the House floor. If the bill reaches that stage, every member of the House of Representatives will have a vote on the addition of an agricultural worker program amendment, as well as the passage of the final bill.

"This is one of those 'every vote counts' situations," said Guenther. "With the increasing likelihood that the House will have a heated floor debate about the provisions in this E-Verify bill, it is critically important that produce industry members personally voice their concerns to their lawmakers. We absolutely must have all of the agricultural voices in the country together on this, pushing for a common-sense solution to what is an extremely dire farm labor situation. Passage of the current E-Verify bill could devastate not only the produce industry, but a large and vibrant section of American agriculture."