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Bordallo urges adoption of H-2B relief in defense act

Kevin Kerrigan | The Guam Daily Post 8 hrs ago

Guam Delegate Madeleine Bordallo has again underscored the importance of resolving the island's need for H-2B workers, telling a House and Senate conference committee that "the H-2B visa crisis has strained Guam's workforce and undermined our construction and health industries."

Bordallo spoke during a hearing Wednesday in Washington, D.C., as the conference committee met to resolve differences over the 2018 National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA. As the ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee's Readiness Subcommittee, she is a member of the Conference Committee.

Since December 2015, the U.S. Customs and Immigration Services has denied nearly 100 percent of all visa applications from Guam. Bordallo has included a provision in the House NDAA to provide USCIS the flexibility it needs to approve more H-2B visa applications for Guam in order to ensure the island has an adequate workforce to meet construction needs for military buildup projects.

Issue 'has serious implications'

In a release, Bordallo said she stressed to the conference committee the

importance of resolving the issue and she is hopeful an agreement will be reached to allow construction projects on Guam to "move forward inside and outside the fence." The H-2B issue "has serious implications for both our civilian and military communities," Bordallo said. "It is imperative that Congress provide relief."

During the meeting, Bordallo said she also expressed her frustration after the Navy "disregarded congressional intent by failing to issue a request for proposal for a dry dock in the Western Pacific." She points out that Congress authorized and appropriated \$9.5 million last year for the Navy to charter a dry dock, which the Navy did not execute. Bordallo has included another provision in the House NDAA that would require the Navy to move forward with that project.

Bordallo also urged adoption of another provision she introduced, calling on the Navy to transfer control of the former Navy ship repair facility – at no cost – to the Guam Economic Development Authority, as required by the 1990 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Act. That would allow Guam to provide ship-repair capabilities to the Navy. She pointed out the Navy does not use the facility anymore and that it has fallen into disrepair.





Madeleine Bordallo

Kevin Kerrigan