

Calvo: Foreign work visa denials a major problem

Gaynor Dumat-ol Daleno and Haidee V Eugenio, Pacific Daily News 9:43 p.m. ChST September 14, 2016



(Photo: PDN file)

Gov. Eddie Calvo on Wednesday said "a new policy by the federal government" has led to a nearly 100-percent denial of H-2B visa applications for foreign skilled workers on Guam.

If the high rejection rate continues, there could be fewer than 100 workers here under the program by the end of the year, compared with 1,689 in October 2015, according to the local Labor Department.

Six of the more than 2,400 Guam H-2B visa petitions were approved this year, according to the Labor Department.

"If not corrected, we're gonna have some major, major problems," Calvo said, adding later: "Hopefully, it's fixed."

Calvo made his comment when speaking to the construction industry Wednesday during a ceremony marking the renovation of a Guam Community College building.



PACIFIC DAILY NEWS

[Adelup: Visa denials could create 'labor crisis'](#)

[\(http://www.guampdn.com/story/news/2016/08/23/adelup-visa-denials-could-create-labor-crisis/89153404/\)](http://www.guampdn.com/story/news/2016/08/23/adelup-visa-denials-could-create-labor-crisis/89153404/)

The high denial rate for workers on H-2B visas is a reverse of what Guam has been allowed to do over the past nearly 50 years, when temporary foreign workers were allowed to fill a recurring shortage of skilled workers, Calvo said. Masons, electricians, carpenters, structural steel workers and nurses have been brought here under this visa.

The long-term solution is for educational institutions, including the GCA Trades Academy, Guam Community College and high schools, to provide more opportunities for residents to learn skilled trades, Calvo said.

The skilled worker shortage is taking a toll on construction and health care services.

Guam's privately run hospital, Guam Regional Medical City, had to temporarily shut down its in-patient pediatrics unit for two weeks earlier this year because of a nursing shortage. The unit reopened after nurses were recruited locally and on the U.S. mainland.

Guam Del. Madeleine Bordallo has introduced language in the defense spending bill that would allow Guam employers to hire foreign workers on H-2B visas if their construction projects are related to the military expansions here, or if the hiring is for health care services. The bill still is being negotiated.

Read or Share this story: <http://www.guampdn.com/story/news/2016/09/14/calvo-foreign-work-visa-denials-major-problem/90345034/>