

Guam Labor: H-2B workers continue to increase

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Guam's foreign worker numbers continue to increase after years of H-2B denials by the federal government

Guam Department of Labor Director David Dell'isola gave an update on the H-2B situation during Bank of Guam's s 2019 Fall Econo the Dusit Thani Resort.

He said the situation has improved significantly since 2016, when Guam faced a nearly 100 percent disapproval rate for H-2B applica

Last month Guam, achieved a milestone of having more than 1,000 H-2B workers, Dell'isola said.

Almost 2,000 have been approved to work on projects both inside and outside the military bases, he said.

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"We're going to see construction, both local and federal, really start to pick up," he said.

The number of H-2B workers on the island hasn't exceeded 1,000 since 2016, the Department of Labor stated in a news release.

The milestone highlights the continued efforts between Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero, Adm. John Menoni and the Guam Department of Lal together, the agency said.

A U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services crackdown on Guam's use of foreign labor has denied nearly all applications. Federal off businesses have long misused the program, intended to only provide temporary labor.

In October 2016, 12 Guam companies that heavily rely on foreign labor filed a federal lawsuit against USCIS, demanding immediate r of temporary worker visas.



Construction workers on the site of the Tsubaki Tower hotel project in Tumon, Jan. 22, 2019. (Photo: Frank San Nicolas/PDN)

The possibility of a settlement was floated in January, but no decision was reached. A motion to dismiss, motion for immediate injunct motion currently are pending.

Next year the agency is looking at the number ranging from 2,000 to 3,000 H-2B workers, Dell'isola said.

He explained that the H-2B workers have been approved through a National Defense Authorization Act exemption that allows the hirir workers for military-related projects and private sector projects, when properly justified.

Guam has been able to work with the admiral to get workers for off-base projects associated with the military realignment, Dell'isola s:

The Department of Defense has been supporting a broad interpretation of the exemption, so many civilian projects have been possibl

Projects include hotel construction and renovation, hotel parking structures, townhomes, 152 low-income housing units, the University Engineering, Forensic Science Lab and family homes, Dell'isola said.

He said not being able to bring H-2B workers has adverse impacts for Guam because the island hasn't been able to meet the constru

Dell'isola encouraged the business community to speak with his agency to help craft a message that would go to the admiral so he ca project is associated with the military realignment.

He said the military will need hotels, houses and other businesses outside the fence, and that is good for the island.

Dell'isola said he expects by 2022 that there will be 10,000 H-2B workers on island to help meet the construction demands.

The governor has said military families stationed on Guam travel the same roads, visit the same malls and eat at the same restaurant construction projects are related to the buildup.

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