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H-2B numbers continue to drop

Louella Losinio | The Guam Daily Post 12 hrs ago

The number of temporary nonimmigrant workers is expected to further dip to 99 by the end of the month based on exit documents already filed at the Guam Department of Labor-Alien Labor Processing and Certification Division.

Greg Massey, administrator of the division, said while current temporary worker numbers are now at 103, this figure will be further reduced to 99 based on exit documents already filed with the division.

Last month, the division reported around 113 temporary workers from the last batch of approvals from 2015 and 2016, which includes a number of workers appealing their visa denials.

In comparison, in March 2016, the island had about 1,500 temporary workers.

“We encourage anyone seeking work in the construction industry to approach the department through our America's Job Center located at the Bell Tower building in Anigua. There are opportunities for assistance in job placement or job training for those persons who are truly willing to learn a trade and work hard in the construction field.”

**– Greg Massey, administrator,
Guam Department of Labor-Alien Labor
Processing and Certification Division**

The flat visa approval rate continues despite the existing H-2B visa cap exemption set by the U.S. Customs and Immigration Services, which covers workers performing labor or services in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and Guam from Nov. 28, 2009, until Dec. 31, 2019.

2018 NDAA

Guam Delegate Madeleine Bordallo recently incorporated a provision in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal 2018 to address the current H-2B visa issue impacting island industries. The House Armed Services Committee recently approved the defense spending bill.

The provision provides USCIS the flexibility to reverse the near-100 percent rate of denial for H-2B visas specific to military construction and the health care sectors in Guam. It also extends Guam's exemption from the national cap on H-2B hiring to Oct. 1, 2020.

"We must ensure that Guam has an adequate workforce to meet military and civilian needs, particularly for our construction and health care industries," Bordallo said.

Impact study updates

GDOL is leading a task force assigned to do the H-2B impact study. The department is working with the Guam Economic Development Authority and other local agencies for the report.

According to Massey, they are still compiling information for the study. "Once we do have a draft, we will still need to get comments and do some edit checks before we will be able to release anything to the public, so when we do finally release, it will not be a draft, but a final report, which is subject to future amendments as new info develops."

For the study, businesses were asked to provide information on the impacts that may result from several reasons, such as a rise in construction costs; delays in construction work due to lack of available workers; inability to supplement local skilled workforce; and inability to engage in large projects.

While seeking a resolution to the H-2B workforce issue, Massey said the department continues efforts to facilitate training by employers through resources made available through federal USDOL funding.

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work hard in the construction field,” he said.

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