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# H2B approvals at 0 percent; only 139 workers left on Guam

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## Contrary to some critics' claims, Department of Labor's Greg Massey says Guam does have a strong core construction workforce.

Guam - The approval rating for H2B workers is now down to 0 percent. That according to Department of Labor's Administrator of Alien Labor Processing Greg Massey who says with no approvals since last year, the number of H2B workers on Guam has dwindled down to just 139. And with numbers that low, experts point out that it's not just the Guam economy that could be affected but the nation's defense as well.

Two experts who have been following the labor shortage crisis on Guam closely addressed members of the business community today for the Chamber of Commerce general membership meeting. Both provided an update, painting a grim picture of Guam's future economy and the risks in our military defense strategies if this labor crisis continues.

The 100 percent denials has created a sense of panic in the business and construction industry as construction projects are put on hold with many construction companies on the brink of shutting down. Even Governor Calvo proclaimed that he would no longer support the military buildup as long as H2B visas continue to be denied.

Meanwhile, Massey attempted to clear up misconceptions about foreign labor on Guam. Contrary to popular belief, the H2B program is not being abused on Guam, he maintained. He also pointed out that Guam has a strong labor workforce with about 5,000 core workers.

But with a military buildup that would require an additional 4,000 to 5,000 workers,"There's no way we're gonna trade up 5,000 extra people in two or three years. So that's why the H2 program is very important. Also, even if we did, say we brought in 5,000 people from the mainland--just so you guys know that's never gonna happen--try to bring in 5,000 construction workers from the mainland at \$50 an hour and let's see if we build anything on this island."

To further drive home that point, from the audience during the question and answer portion, Carl Peterson of Money Resources, Inc., said a study was conducted on the island's workforce. Overall in the US mainland, 4.9 percent of the workforce is in construction. In Hawaii, it's 4.6 percent.

"As of September last year, 9.6 percent of the workforce in Guam is in construction. So we've done twice as good as Hawaii," Peterson noted.

However, while Massey and immigration lawyer Attorney Melinda Swavely note that there are domestic laborers on Guam, they acknowledge that H2B workers tend to fill a gap in construction work that not many in the local workforce seek.

"These jobs though, these carpenters, masons and rebar guys, people are knocking down the doors trying to

do those re... er... There are some but not in the numbers that we need," said Massey. (/) (http://www.pacificnewscenter.com/livestream)

"Like Greg was saying, we have the US workforce, but they're not the ones that are necessarily gonna wanna be out there being the cement... (http://www.pacificnewscenter.com/local/13412) That's traditionally--I think the issue, right?--is that a lot of the US workers are the electricians, the plumbers, the inside workers," added Swavely.

Swavely says with a pool this limited, a military buildup would be impossible and that in turn will have a ripple effect on the nation's military defense with Guam's strategic importance in the Asia Pacific region.

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