



Philippines backs Adelup's fix for skilled worker issue



The Leon Guerrero administration says its managed to avert another major snag in the foreign worker program. High-level officials in the Philippine government have agreed to Guam's recommended fix that will allow the flow of Filipino skilled workers to continue.

Labor Director David Dell'Isola says local contractors were caught off guard a few months ago when the Philippine consulate here began holding back worker approvals.

"Basically, the consul general was given instructions not to sign-off on the authentication of the employment contract thus it was being stuck there," he told KUAM News.

The consulate was enforcing a Philippine government regulation that requires employers to provide overseas Filipino workers with free room and board. Dell'Isola says while it has been on the books, it's never been enforced here. He says the governor sent her senior economic advisor Carl Gutierrez to Manila to set a meeting with the Philippine labor secretary, and the head of the Philippine overseas employment administration, a powerful agency that's charged with overseeing Filipinos abroad and whose remittances account for more than 10 percent of the economy.

Dell'Isola says they were able to convince them that Guam's higher salaries more than offset the room and board requirement.

"Our H-2 workers make an average of \$15.64 an hour, which is the prevailing wage, and that wage is significantly higher than the wage that is given to the worker in the Philippines," Dell'Isola explained. "So that is what I said is our off-setting benefit, and if this provision isn't removed, that it'll effectively make the Philippine H2 non-competitive and that the contractors will most likely go to different countries."

He expects Manila will give the local consulate authorization this week to sign off on pending

worker contracts as they work on a formal country exemption.

"And that would put a permanent fix in place so that if there's change in administration down the road this subject won't pop up and become an issue again," he said.

