

In 2020, Philippines still not on US list of H-2B designated countries

Haidee Eugenio Gilbert, Pacific Daily News Published 1:21 p.m. ChT Jan. 23, 2020

For the second year in a row, the Philippines has been excluded from the U.S. government's list of countries eligible to participate in the H-2A and H-2B worker visa programs in 2020.

This is based on the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's 2020 list. The list, which has more than 80 countries, remains unchanged from 2019.

The Philippines was removed in the 2019 list over concerns of severe overstaying and human trafficking.

But while the Philippines is not on the list, the federal government may still approve H-2A and H-2B petitions on a case-by-case basis, if doing so is determined to be in the best interest of the United States, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security says in a notice on the Federal Register.



In this file photo, carpenter Orlando Del Mundo removes nails from plywood panels as he and other 5M Construction Corporation employees work at a warehouse building project in Tamuning on Tuesday. The island's construction industry faces hard times as the federal government continues to reject most H-2 worker visa applications (Photo: Pacific Marketplace file photo)

In Guam's case, H-2B visa workers from the Philippines continue to be approved on a case-by-case basis because of massive construction of required infrastructure related to the military realignment on the island.

The 2020 list does not affect the status of foreign workers who currently hold valid H-2A or H-2B visas.

A long wait: [First batch of new H-2B workers arrives on Guam after nearly 3 years \(/story/news/2018/06/13/first-batch-new-h-2-b-workers-arrives-guam-after-nearly-3-years/697020002/\)](/story/news/2018/06/13/first-batch-new-h-2-b-workers-arrives-guam-after-nearly-3-years/697020002/)

Guam has been relying on the Philippines, for decades, as the main source for its H-2B workers such as cement masons, carpenters, iron workers, heavy equipment operators and electricians, because of the limited local labor pool.

But at least one contractor, Guam Pacific Mechanical and Electrical, has looked beyond the Philippines for workforce needs by bringing in 10 [H-2B workers from Mexico this month \(/story/money/2020/01/16/h-2-b-visas-10-workers-mexico-arriving-guam-month/4473636002/\)](/story/money/2020/01/16/h-2-b-visas-10-workers-mexico-arriving-guam-month/4473636002/).

H-2A visas are issued for seasonal labor for agricultural work, and are not used on Guam.

Homeland Security's 2020 designation is in effect from Jan. 19, 2020 to Jan. 18, 2021, after which federal agency will issue a new list.\

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