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Recruit workers from Fiji, forum speaker proposes

JOHN O'CONNOR | THE GUAM DAILY POST

11 HRS AGO



ROUTE 3: Work continues on the road widening project along Route 3 in Dededo in April. Some of the military and civilian construction projects related to the military buildup on Guam need additional imported labor. Dontana Keraskes/The Gua Daily Post

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TRUMP-AFFILIATED RECRUITER WANTS TO BRING MEXICAN WORKERS TO GUAM

Fiji is being pitched as a source of foreign labor for Guam in light of restrictions on bringing in workers on H-2B visas from the Philippines.

About 3,000 miles from Guam, Fiji remains eligible to supply foreign workers on H-2B visas, said Viliame Veutibau, a speaker at the Guam Association of Realtors

forum Friday afternoon.

Some of the markets that have recruited workers from Fiji include the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates, Veutibau said.

Students in Fiji are taught English in school.

"Everyone that you might get over here will probably speak English as well as I am right now – as well as reading and understanding English," Veutibau said.

Veutibau said there shouldn't be any transition issues as Fiji is similar to Guam. Some of the cons include the cost of travel, since there is no direct flight between Fiji and Guam.

There are also some issues with the accreditation of Fiji's learning institutions, and it is likely that most of the money made on Guam will be remitted back to Fiji, Veutibau said.

Issues with local labor

In the last three to five years, Guam's local laborers have handled most of the construction work on the island as H-2B numbers dwindled.

The workforce is "pretty good" but also "probably isn't as skilled as we'd like it to be," said Bill Beery, a construction manager, and speaker at the forum.

Skills training is where the GCA Trades Academy comes

in, he added. The institution helps train and teach skills needed to improve the overall productivity of local workers. Beery is also a board member for the academy.

Still, this shouldn't downplay the need for H-2B workers, Beery said. There is still a shortage of labor on Guam as military and civilian projects pile up.

The military buildup on Guam has been a driving force for the need for skilled, imported labor. Since the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' denials of petitions for H-2B visas began, contractors have been skittish about petitioning workers on H-2B visas.

Some of Guam's employers have been able to bring in foreign workers on H-2B visas under the National Defense Authorization Act, which lifts certain foreign labor restrictions for contracts or projects directly related or somewhat connected to the military buildup.

There is the perception that the project has to be directly connected to a military contract but this isn't the case, said Greg Massey, the administrator of the Alien Labor Processing and Certification Division at the Guam Department of Labor.

Hundreds of H-2B workers working on the Tsubaki Tower hotel project were petitioned as part of a justification that the project is related to the anticipated increase in visitors stemming from the military buildup.

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Reporting on utilities, education and other topics.

