

Surge in foreign labor coming to Guam by 2019

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We may be seeing the beginning of the end to the local labor crisis. As many as 1,500 foreign workers could be here by the end of the year, and that number could jump to 4,500 by the end of 2019. That was the Labor Department's projection during a presentation Wednesday for the Chamber of Commerce.

Already Governor Eddie Calvo has signed more than 1,200 letters of support for companies seeking to hire H2B workers. Labor's alien processing and certification administrator Greg Massey says they are among the final steps before submitting petitions to the USCIS.

"That's the process where they have to go and recruit and offer these jobs to US workers and get vetted by our office and they have to meet a whole bunch of requirements. So at the end of that labor certification process the governor is the one that actually signs off on the labor cert. and that's a document that they have to have before they file with immigration" he said.

A lack of skilled foreign workers has stopped many contractors from bidding for projects that they wouldn't be able to complete. The first company has filed for 300 workers under a new congressional exemption that authorizes up to 4,000, specifically for military projects. Massey says it should serve as a test case for how the USCIS approval process will go, adding, "Within 2 or 3 weeks, maybe a month we're going to have a little bit better idea of what the temperature is and maybe give some more confidence to people to start filing. I was expecting kind of a rash of filings but it's only been I think about 12 or 14 employers that have filed."

He says other contractors may be waiting to see how the first company fares, because its expensive to file and they don't want to risk rejection. Massey says the H2B workers will augment a local labor force that numbers about 5,000.



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