

2021 Rocky Mountain Farmers Union Proposed Special Order of Business

Support for Agricultural Workers

Whereas: agricultural workers support the economy and health of the United States. The COVID-19 crisis elevated the importance of protecting these workers to the level of a national emergency when many of them were deemed “essential” based on their contribution to the nation’s food supply. The COVID-19 crisis reveals the need for change to ensure the long-term stability of the food system.

Whereas: participants in the H-2A program work in the United States to perform similar essential labor to other agricultural workers. Agricultural workers in the H-2A program can move between multiple regions or states throughout the growing season.

Whereas: physical distancing and proper ventilation in enclosed spaces help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Current regulations governing employer-provided housing do not protect workers against the spread of airborne diseases. OSHA has not adopted a standard specifically designed to address the occupational risks related to the disease.

Whereas: the United States Senate previously passed bipartisan legislation to create an expedited pathway to citizenship for agricultural workers in the Agricultural Worker Program Act of 2013. A comprehensive overhaul of immigration policy remains a goal of Congress and the people of the United States.

Whereas: creating a pathway to citizenship for agricultural workers who work in the United States for many years incentivizes compliance with the law. A pathway to citizenship for agricultural workers would support a just and efficient immigration system to help secure a more prosperous future for the United States.

Therefore, be it Resolved: we urge OSHA to modify standards affecting agricultural workers living in employer-provided housing to specifically address the challenges of the COVID-19 crisis.

Therefore, be it Further Resolved: we urge Congress to include a pathway to citizenship for agricultural workers as part of comprehensive immigration reform.