

Don't tie our hands!
December 2008

Congress must pass comprehensive immigration reform in 2008!

Not too many issues in the last decade have created such a wave of frustration, protests, and "back-peddling" as the immigration debates in Washington, D.C. The seven years I lived and worked on Capitol Hill I tried to distance myself from this contentious issue. Then I moved to Florida!

Congress has failed to pass a comprehensive immigration reform bill again this year. It has been two decades since Congress passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act. The connection between farm labor and immigration policies is a longstanding one, particularly with regard to U.S. employers' use of workers from Mexico. A little more than one-half of the seasonal agricultural services (SAS) work force is not authorized to hold U.S. jobs.

The Senate has debated immigration reform a number of times in the 110th Congress. Unfortunately, the House of Representatives has been less engaged in the debate stating that once the Senate passes a bill they will take up the issue. Traditionally, legislation stalls in the Senate while the House passes a bulk of the controversial issues. The tables have turned on immigration. This issue is a campaign buster and House Members are very concerned about the 2008 elections.

Immigration reform and guest worker legislation has been a priority for Florida Farm Bureau. However, we are going to really step up the pace in 2008. Our hands are tied until Congress acts on immigration and legal guest workers reform. The question is what will it take to get Congress to recognize the crisis and potential melt-down in agriculture, construction and service industries? How many fields will go unplanted or un-harvested?

I'm not going to sit here watching CSPAN and be mad anymore. Well, maybe I will but I'm also going to do something about it and I need your help. The squeaky wheel is how Congress acts. I urge you to participate in the campaign, "Don't tie our hands! Comprehensive Immigration Reform '08!"

The plan is to have hay string, rope or yarn cut to be about a foot long attached to a note card reading "Don't tie our hands! Comprehensive Immigration Reform in '08." The county offices will have these cards available. I ask that each of you pick up a few of these cards, drop one off at your Congressional District offices and/or mail one to your delegation's D.C. office. We will provide you with contact information and addresses.

I would like to know that at least 100 pieces of rope/string will reach each congressional office. That means 2500 contacts will be made to the House of Representatives alone! Let's get moving and not let Congress tie our hands any longer!