



"Voice of Louisiana
Agriculture"

Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation, Inc.

P.O. BOX 95004 • 9516 AIRLINE HIGHWAY
BATON ROUGE, LA. 70895-9004 • PH. 225/922-6200

To: LFBF State Board, Executive Committee, Parish Presidents, LFBF Commodity Advisory Committees, Young Farmers and Ranchers, Women's Committee, LFBF Field Staff, LFBF Staff, Advisors

From: Brian Breaux – Senior Commodity/Public Policy Director

RE: New Information - H-2 Interview Waiver from U.S. Dept. of State

Yesterday, the U.S. Dept. of State in consultation with the U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security issued an announcement that they have expanded the categories of H-2 applicants eligible for an Interview Waiver allowing more applications that can be adjudicated without an in-person interview at the U.S. Consulate offices.

The announcement states that "Consular Officers, can, if they choose to do so, waive the visa interview requirement for first-time and returning H-2 applications who have no apparent ineligibility or potential ineligibility" (flags on record).

This will expand the consulate interview waivers from processing only renewal H-2A and H-2B workers to processing most returning H-2A and H-2B workers (*worked in previous 48 months and did not utilize a visa waiver on their last visa*) and new H-2A, H-2B Visa applicants as long as the applicant does not have a flag on their record that would make the visa worker ineligible or have utilized a visa waiver on their previous visa.

Attached is the announcement from the U.S. Dept. of State.

Important Announcement on H2 Visas

Last Updated: March 26, 2020

In response to significant worldwide challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of State temporarily suspended routine visa services at all U.S. Embassies and Consulates as of March 20, 2020. As resources allow, embassies and consulates will continue to provide emergency and mission critical visa services.

The H-2 program is essential to the economy and food security of the United States and is a national security priority. Therefore, we intend to continue processing H-2 cases as much as possible, as permitted by post resources and local government restrictions.

Secretary Pompeo, in consultation with the Department of Homeland Security, has authorized consular officers to expand the categories of H-2 visa applicants whose applications can be adjudicated without an in-person interview.

Consular officers can, if they so choose, now waive the visa interview requirement for first-time and returning H-2 applicants who have no apparent ineligibility or potential ineligibility. This expansion also increases the period in which returning workers may qualify for an interview waiver.

Applicants whose previous visas expired in the last 48 months, and who did not require a waiver of ineligibility the last time they applied, do not need to be interviewed in-person if they are applying for the same visa classification as their previous visa. We anticipate the vast majority of otherwise qualified H-2 applicants will now be adjudicated without an interview.

Consular resources and local government restrictions vary widely, and each consular section is continuously reviewing its capacity to adjudicate visa applications during this worldwide pandemic. We encourage applicants to consult with the relevant U.S. embassy or consulate in order to confirm the level of services currently offered. Our overseas missions will resume routine visa services as soon as possible but are unable to provide a specific date at this time.

This expanded eligibility will make most H-2A and H-2B applications eligible for an in-person consulate interview waiver.

Clearly, this is great news that will benefit many Louisiana farmers and agricultural processors.

We will continue to track information from our sources and send out additional information as it becomes available.

Please feel free to contact me at brianb@lfbf.org or at 225-603-0924 if you become aware of additional labor situations that may arise or if you have information that we can share with our members.

Best Regards,

Brian