

THE FRONT PAGE

News & Views You Can Use

Senate Passes Immigration Reform

The Senate passed a sweeping immigration reform bill on May 25, setting the stage for a potential confrontation with the House over how to fix the country's broken immigration system.

Immigration reform – and what to do with the estimated 12-15 million illegal and undocumented workers here – is the most contentious issue to hit Congress in some time. Not only do the Republicans differ with the Democrats on the issues of strengthening border security and handling illegal aliens, there are splits within the parties over the same issues. Small wonder that the Senate debated its bill for two weeks before passing the measure 62-36.

As reported previously in *The Equiry*, the American Horse Council (AHC) believes that comprehensive immigration and guest worker reform is important to the horse industry. Horse breeders, ranchers, training facilities, horse shows, trainers and others depend on seasonal and long-term foreign workers to fill labor demands not met by American workers. The industry needs workable programs, not only for its H-2A agricultural workers, but also for its H-2B non-agricultural workers.

Strengthening Enforcement

As a recent AHC press release explained, the Senate bill is broader than the “enforcement first” bill passed last December by the House of Representatives. The final bill includes provisions to strengthen enforcement, such as hiring more border patrol agents, using new technologies like tamper-proof identification cards to replace social security cards, and increasing penalties on employers who hire illegal aliens. But it also includes measures to allow undocumented workers to “legalize” their status and work their way toward permanent residency or citizenship. In addition, there are changes to the current programs for the admission of new temporary alien workers.

The legislation includes a new guest-worker approach with a new H-2C category for year-round workers who could be admitted for up

to three years. Although this program is primarily for non-agricultural workers, it could be used for jobs in agriculture that are not seasonal or temporary. According to the AHC, many jobs in the horse industry might fit into that category.

The bill also includes a three-year extension of the current H-2B program, which is used by many horse trainers and facilities to employ alien workers. That program was amended last year so that returning foreign workers who had been admitted previously under the H-2B program would not be counted against the mandated cap of 65,000 annually.

Agricultural Provisions

The bill includes the so-called AgJOBS bill, introduced by Senator Larry Craig (R-ID) and included in the base bill by Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA). As detailed in AHC reports, this bill has been supported by the agriculture industry for some time and includes some favorable changes. These new provisions would amend the current labor certification process and replace it with an expedited process to hire foreign workers in the H-2A category, those used in the agricultural segment of the horse industry.

The Senate-passed bill would also allow aliens who have been doing agricultural work in the United States, but do not have valid documentation, to earn adjustment to legal status by meeting specific agricultural work requirements. The adjustment provisions would provide an opportunity for agricultural employers, including horse farm employers, to retain an experienced workforce while also using a revamped H-2A program. Entitlement to use the program would require an alien worker to demonstrate that he or she had been employed and was committed to continue to work in agriculture for a period of years before he or she could earn permanent residency or citizenship.

Ongoing Debate

Now that the both the House and Senate have passed bills, it will take a conference committee representing both chambers to negotiate a compromise bill that must then be returned to Congress for a final vote. The House and Senate bills are very different;

there is strong opposition to a broad approach by the House, where many want to tighten border security and enact stronger enforcement provisions before considering broader reform.

House Passes ‘Right-to-Ride’

The U.S. House of Representatives passed Congressman George Radanovich's “Right-to-Ride” bill (H.R. 586) on May 16. The bill is intended to protect the use and access of pack and saddle stock animals on public lands, wilderness areas, national monuments, and other areas administered by the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, or the Forest Service, where there is a historical tradition of such use.

According to the AHC, which supports the legislation, it would require that these federal agencies manage these lands to preserve and facilitate the traditional and continued use and access of horses to these areas.

During the debate on this legislation, Congressman Radanovich (R-CA) reportedly stated, “Perhaps no other activity is more synonymous with the exploration of our vast open lands than that of the use of pack and saddle stock. Who could forget those images of President Teddy Roosevelt and John Muir on horseback at what was to become the Grand Canyon and Yosemite National Parks?”

“While some claim that this bill singles out pack and saddle use and affords it greater consideration than other forms of recreation or commercial use, I would argue that pack and saddle use has played a far greater historic role on our public lands, particularly in our Western states, than simply recreation. What may be perceived by some today as recreation was once a vital part of everyday living throughout our nation's history.”

Industry attention is now on the Senate bill (S. 781) introduced by Senator Mike Crapo (R-ID).

(continued)



WE GET MAIL!

Alive and Kicking

Sometimes it is truly amazing how situations become grossly exaggerated! A recent letter from the chairman of the Board of Governors of Goshen Hounds in preparation for our annual meeting has been misconstrued to be an announcement of Goshen's final season. Nothing could be further from the truth!

Let me set the record straight. Goshen has just completed one of the best seasons of hunting in its 50-year history. We have a young pack of hounds that showed incredible sport from the opening day of cubbing to the final meet. We have an outstanding huntsman in Robert Taylor, who represents four generations of foxhunting acumen. We have a dedicated honorary staff that assists in walking hounds every morning at 8 a.m. (come join us for a morning stroll from the kennels to see for yourself). We have a strong core membership that takes the art of foxhunting seriously while never losing track of the larger objective of having fun.

At our annual meeting, we did make a few changes, which, after all, is the purpose of such meetings. We have elected two new members to the seven-member board. Steve Glassman will now serve as the chairman, and all who know Steve recognize what a dynamic person he is. The board then chose to add two joint-Masters, so that the workload could be more equitably spread out. That means that Master Holly Hamilton will continue to lead the first field, while Master Mark Challberg will continue to whip. Huntsman Robert Taylor has been appointed Master as well so that the breeding, training, and

hunting of hounds will be directly his responsibility. Master Tom Pardoe will lead the second field.

As the "off season" progresses, it will become apparent that this team has no intention of being Goshen's last. We all recognize that we have the opportunity for wonderful sport, and we will work tirelessly not just to preserve it, but [to] expand and improve the sort of hunting that we all love.

C. Thompson Pardoe
Joint-Master, Goshen Hounds
Woodbine

Trail Talk

You will be happy to know that the Potomac Bridle & Hiking Trails Association (PBHTA) has received more than one grant from the State Highway Authority to repair trails in the Potomac area.

In January, our club received \$6,000 to construct a 160-foot culvert to restore the trail tread on our Travilah Loop. It was a complicated job and required contracting a small professional landscape company. This year, we plan to expand our territory and repair (with state funding) an extremely damaged section of very important trail in Poolesville. We hope the trail riders will be pleased with the results.

Our small organization will soon be affiliating with EPIC (Equestrians Partners in Conservation) in hopes of uniting the Montgomery County equestrians and related industries into a strong effort to preserve open space and develop a sanctioned trail system. EPIC will work with landowners to foster better relationships with the equestrian community and with equestrians to develop responsible use of trails.

Watch for the EPIC website soon! To volunteer for the latest Montgomery County trail construction project along the Muddy Branch Stream Valley, contact ben.sugar@mncppc-mc.org.

Sincerely,
Naomi Manders
Treasurer, PBHTA
Potomac
