

Employer Handbook Result of Concerns Raised During Meeting Slaughter Hosted with Labor Department Officials and Upstate Growers

WASHINGTON – Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee and long-time advocate for farmers, today announced that the U.S. Department of Labor released an Employer Handbook for employers anticipating filing an H-2A application for next season. It was thanks to a meeting Slaughter convened with top officials from the Labor Department and local farmers that alerted them to the complaints of growers across the northeast about paperwork delays, excessive burdens, and confusion with both growers and administrators of the program. The handbook released today reflects the growers' desire for more clarity on the H-2A application process.

Slaughter has been the champion of Upstate farmers understanding that jobs are at stake when agriculture, the number one economic driver in Upstate New York, suffers from federal delays. Without an adequate labor force, crops will not get picked during the harvest causing catastrophic financial effects to local farms.

In June, Slaughter [wrote a letter](#) to U.S. Department of Labor Secretary Hilda Solis and a follow up [summit she hosted in July](#) with Deputy Secretary Seth Harris, Members of Congress and several regional growers that allowed many of the concerns raised consistently by local growers to be addressed directly by the Labor Department. The summit finally provided local growers the forum they needed to express their frustrations with the Labor Department's policies and gave the Labor Department and Deputy Secretary much-needed feedback on the difficulties of the H-2A application process. Following the meeting, which stretched into hours, Slaughter called it, "one of the most productive I've had during my time in Congress."

The handbook announced today directly addresses many of the concerns brought up during the July summit and subsequent conversations between local growers and the Department of Labor.

"This is a terrific resource that the Department of Labor has provided and I want to thank them for their attention to the questions our Upstate farmers have raised," said Slaughter who hosted a summit of Department of Labor officials, Members of Congress and Upstate growers in July. "Farmers who deal with the H-2A application process know it to be cumbersome and complex but after our discussion, I know that's beginning to change and I'm delighted for it. They already gamble with the weather, they shouldn't have to gamble with federal paperwork to obtain a legal workforce, and I'm doing everything I can to see that they don't."

[The 16-page employer handbook, complete with information on filing job orders and H-2A applications, conducting recruitment for U.S. workers, completing the temporary labor certification process and other helpful resources, can be found here.](#)

This isn't the first positive step to come out of Slaughter's efforts and the conversations from July's meeting.

In September, the Department of Labor announced that [action is already being taken](#) to enhance the administration of the program by making better use of the internet, establishing a web-based filing system, providing more guidance to growers before they file necessary paperwork, and making Department representatives available to growers early in the process to more quickly iron out any discrepancies.

[For more on Slaughter's tireless efforts on behalf of Upstate New York's farmers, click here.](#)