

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 7, 2016

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretaries Kerry and Johnson:

As you know, communities across the Pacific Northwest, and around the country, rely heavily on the agricultural businesses that harvest tree fruit and other seasonal produce. Every year, our farmers and growers depend on the thousands of seasonal workers who come for temporary employment and are processed through the H-2A visa program. We fully support efforts to ensure that both employers and employees comply with the statutory requirements of the H-2A program. To use the H-2A program, farmers must go through the very long and arduous process of certifying the need for H-2A workers with the Department of Labor, applying for visas with the Department of State, and working with Custom and Border Protection to obtain entry, all well in advance of harvest. In recent years, the failure of the Consular Consolidated Database (CCD) to adequately operate has provided another hurdle to obtaining H-2A visas and ensuring an adequate workforce. The various issues plaguing the CCD has delayed U.S. embassies from issuing thousands of H-2A visas, leaving growers to suffer heavy losses as crops rot in the fields, going unharvested due to the lack of labor.

After experiencing two seasons of delays created by the CCD, our farmers are very concerned that their growing season will be hindered again by yet another problem with the CCD. We respectfully request an update on the following:

- What steps are you taking to ensure the readiness of the CCD prior to the 2016 harvest season?
- Have the issues that plagued the system in 2014 and 2015 been fully resolved?
- Given that this issue has happened over two consecutive years, have you put in place emergency procedures should a technical issue, once again, create a back-log?

With a new harvest season quickly approaching, we know that you will want to anticipate and address this problem before it becomes another major difficulty, costing farming businesses millions of dollars and causing harm to the consumers they serve and the jobs they support.

We look forward to your update on the steps you are taking to ensure that our farmers do not hit this roadblock for a third year. Specifically, we ask that you provide us with a briefing on

the current challenges faced by the State Department and the Department of Homeland Security in operating the CCD, particularly in light of the increased labor demands in agriculture sectors. We look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



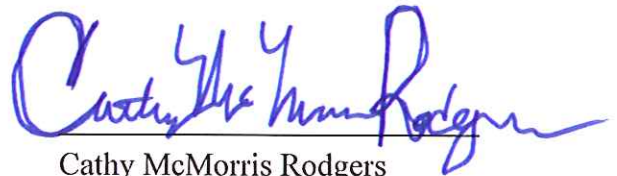
Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress



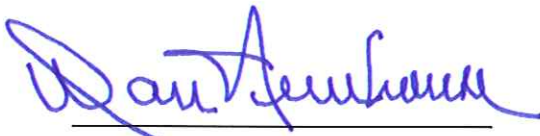
Dave Reichert
Member of Congress



Suzan DelBene
Member of Congress



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress



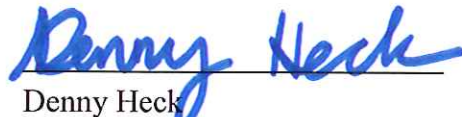
Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress



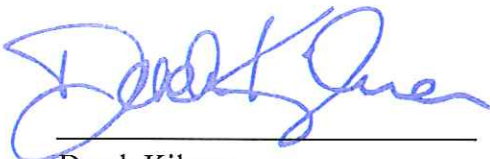
Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



Kurt Schrader
Member of Congress



Denny Heck
Member of Congress



Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress