

Foreign Migrant Worker and Permit Chronology 1619-2011

- 1619** Twenty Africans are brought to Virginia aboard a Dutch warship. They become indentured servants.
- 1670** 10,000 indentured servants, culled from the poor and criminal, are kidnapped, brought under compulsion or come voluntarily from England to the Colonies.
- 1808** Congress makes foreign slave trade illegal. 50,000 slaves smuggled in after 1808 become first illegal aliens in the United States. Congress does not interfere.
- 1849** Supreme Court rules that Congress alone can regulate immigration as "foreign commerce."
- 1863-1869** Central Pacific Railroad hires Chinese laborers and the Union Pacific hires Irish laborers to construct the first transcontinental railroad.
- July 4, 1864** First Congressional attempt to centralize immigration control; a Commissioner of Immigration is appointed by the US President.
- 1875-1880** State immigration laws become unconstitutional; Congress begins to bring immigration under direct federal control for the first time.
- 1891** U.S. Congress establishes the first Federal Administrative Agency for the Regulation of Immigration.
- 1910** The Mexican Revolution drives thousands of Mexicans across the US-Mexican border
- 1911** 42 volume Dillingham Commission Report recommends admission of aliens be based on economic or business considerations.
- 1917** During World War I, temporary Mexican farm workers, railroad laborers, and miners are permitted to enter the United States to work.
- 1921** Limits on the number of immigrants allowed to enter the United States during a single year are imposed for the first time in the country's history. As the first of two national origin quota acts designed to curtail immigration from eastern and southern Europe and Asia is passed, Mexico and Puerto Rico become major sources of workers.
- May 28, 1924** US Border Patrol established.
- 1929** With the onset of the Great Depression, Mexican immigration to the United States virtually ceases and return migration increases sharply.
- 1930s-1940s** The southern whites and blacks of the U.S. migrant agricultural labor force displace many Mexican workers.
- 1943** Prompted by the labor shortage of World War II, the U.S. government makes an agreement with the Mexican government to supply temporary workers, known as *braceros*, for American agricultural and railroad work. 5,000,000 Mexican laborers work in the U.S over a 22-year period. The Federal H-2 labor program begins when the Florida sugar cane industry obtains permission to hire Caribbean workers to cut sugar cane on non-immigrant temporary visas.
- 1950s-1960s** Black workers continue to be the most numerous migrant workers along the eastern seaboard states, while Mexican and Mexican-American workers soon dominate the migrant paths between Texas and the Great Lakes, the Rocky Mountain region, and the area from California to the Pacific Northwest.
- 1951** The *Bracero* Program is formalized as the Mexican Farm Labor Supply Program and the Mexican Labor Agreement. It brings an annual average of 350,000 Mexican workers to the United States until its end in 1964.
- 1954-1958** Operation Wetback, a government effort to locate and deport undocumented workers, results in the deportation of 3.8 million persons of Mexican descent.
- 1960s** A third phase of labor migration to the United States begins when the established patterns of movement from Mexico and Puerto Rico to the United States are modified, and migration from other countries increases. The *Bracero* Program ends in 1964, and, after a brief decline in immigration, workers from Mexico increasingly arrive to work under the auspices of the H-2 Program of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, as well as for family unification, or as undocumented workers.
- 1965** The end of the *Bracero* Program forces many Mexicans to return to Mexico. They settle near the U.S. border. The Mexican and U.S. governments begin border industrialization programs, allowing foreign corporations to build and operate assembly plants on the border. These plants, known as *maquiladoras*, multiply rapidly, transforming the border region. The *maquiladoras* attract companies because they provide cheap labor close to American markets.

The little-known H-2 program remains on the books.

- 1970** Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) Commissioner Leonard Chapman claims that there are as many as 12 million undocumented workers in the country. Other observers most commonly place the number in the range of 3.5 million to 5 million people.
- 1970s-early 1980s** The rise in politically motivated violence in Central America spurs a massive increase in undocumented immigration to the United States.
- 1986** The H-2 program is revised and divided into the H-2A agricultural visa program and the H-2B non-agricultural visa program. The "Immigration and Reform and Control Act" criminalizes the hiring of illegal immigrants. The I-9/Employment Eligibility Verification Form is required from every employee.
- Apr. 24, 1996** "Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act" tightens immigration to protect against terrorism.
- 1997** **E-Verify** – An internet-based program, established in 1997 as the Basic Pilot Program, is created to prevent illegal aliens from getting jobs.
- Jan. 2007** US Department of Homeland Security estimates 11.8 million unauthorized immigrants in US with 59% from Mexico.
- January 10, 2007** "**AgJobs**," "The Agricultural Job Opportunities, Benefits and Security Act of 2007" provides a reform of the H-2A agricultural worker visa program. It fails to pass.
- Apr. 23, 2010** **Arizona Bill, SB 1070** signed into law, expands the state's authority to combat illegal immigration.
- June 2010** "**Take our Jobs**" national campaign by the United Farm Workers, challenges unemployed Americans to take farm labor jobs. In Michigan, two people show up for 50 openings.
- February, 2011** Utah passes the "Guest Worker Program Act," **H.B.0116**.
- May 26, 2011** US Supreme Court upholds Arizona Law penalizing businesses that hire illegal immigrants.
- July 12, 2011** **Twelve Michigan Farm Organizations** send a proposal to Lamar Smith, Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. The proposal lays out criteria for a national agricultural worker program to ensure that farmers have access to an adequate legal work force.
- September 7, 2011** **H.R. 2847**, "The American Specialty Agriculture Act" is introduced to establish the H-2C guest worker program for temporary seasonal workers. It dies in committee.
- September 22, 2011** **H.R. 3017**, "The Agricultural Labor Market Reform Act" would establish a new program to supplement the H-2A agricultural visa. That and the related **Senate Bill, S.1258** (June 22, 2011) "The Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act," are referred to their respective Judiciary committees for consideration in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress.

#### PRIMARY SOURCES:

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#### OTHER:

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[thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov) (try without www.)– Library of Congress website for Federal Legislative information

[judiciary.house.gov](http://judiciary.house.gov) (try without www.) – U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary

[www.usa.gov](http://www.usa.gov) – U.S. Government website

For State legislation go to: [www.michigan.gov](http://www.michigan.gov), [www.utah.gov](http://www.utah.gov), [www.az.gov](http://www.az.gov)