



PERMANENT CAP RELIEF FOR THE H-2B PROGRAM

INDUSTRY BACKGROUND

- The Outdoor Amusement Business Association was formed in 1965, it's the largest national trade association representing the mobile entertainment industry. OABA represents some 2,500 members, is comprised of carnivals, circuses, food/game concessionaires, independent ride owners, manufacturers/ suppliers and others who serve America's Fairs, Festivals and Community events, including charitable, philanthropic organizations, on a seasonal basis.
- OABA works with community, civic, and other non-profit, charitable organizations, including church groups, Volunteer Fire Departments, Shriners, Lion Clubs, VFW Posts, and many more. Revenue created by these civic events support their benevolent causes, provide educational scholarships for young people, and purchase life-saving, fire-fighting, medical and other equipment. These are just a few of causes that rely on our industry as a major fundraising tool.
- The vast majority of OABA members are small, family businesses, many in their second and third generation of ownership. Many businesses involved in the mobile amusement industry are generational, family businesses, some in their third and fourth generation of family operation.
- The mobile entertainment industry is a major economic engine with an estimated 25,000 employees involved seasonally, and some 5,000 full-time, year-round employees. The economic impact of this industry and its impact on America's fairs, festivals and community events is in the range of several billion dollars, annually.
- Due to the seasonal nature of this industry, combined with the challenges of securing, reliable seasonal labor and the mobility of those engaged in the business, the industry has relied on some 6,500 to 7,000 H-2B visa employees.
- The H-2B visa program has been plagued with constantly changing H-2B regulations and severe processing delays. Seasonal employers in the mobile amusement industry cannot plan for future business growth, purchase new rides/equipment and execute contracts with America's fairs, etc., when there is continued uncertainty with the H-2B visa program from one year to the next.
- Seasonal employers such as carnivals cannot recruit enough U.S. workers under any circumstances to maintain an adequate legal workforce to meet their contractual obligations during the season of operation.
- The existing statutory cap of 66,000 is outdated and inadequate especially during a strong economy with low unemployment.

CONGRESSIONAL REQUEST

We need **real, permanent and genuine cap relief for the H-2B program** through authorizing legislation and we seek your assistance in *providing a permanent and substantial increase in the number of H-2B visas available every year. We need your commitment to help pass authorizing language this year to accomplish that goal.*

CONTACT NAME: _____ ORGANIZATION: _____
TELEPHONE: _____ EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

FAIRS & EXPOS ADVOCACY ON CAPITOL HILL

Telling Your Story

The mobile entertainment industry – which is comprised of carnivals, circuses, food/game concessionaires, independent ride owners, manufacturers/suppliers and others - serve America's Fairs, Festivals and Community events, including charitable, philanthropic organizations, on a seasonal basis. The industry provides wholesome family entertainment and fun for 500 million Americans for up to 10 months each year by providing portable amusement rides, food, and games to local carnivals, festivals, charity events and state and local agricultural fairs.

Since Elkanah Watson's first small county fair in the early 1800s, fairs have shown few signs of decline. Today, there are approximately 2,000 county and state fairs nationwide. Some of these fairs, such as the State Fair of Texas and the Erie County Fair in New York, continually draw in more than 1,000,000 attendees each year, making them some of the most greatly-attended events in the country.

Fairs not only promote agriculture, but also supply jobs; support rural economic development and local commerce; and provide opportunities for youth and adult education. The success of a fair is dependent on its volunteers and youth through programs. Groups like 4-H and the Future Farmers of America encourage young people to participate in agriculture, and offer both educational demonstrations and competitions at a number of yearly events.

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Framing the Issue - Fairs and the Mobile Entertainment Industry Rely Upon Temporary Seasonal Labor

Due to the seasonal nature of this industry, combined with the challenges of securing, reliable seasonal labor and the mobility of those engaged in the business, the industry has relied on some 6,500 to 7,000 H-2B visa employees. This industry has a very high percentage of returning labor, each season, with its seasonal guest workers in the H-2B visa program. The H-2B visa program has been plagued with constantly changing H-2B regulations and severe processing delays. Seasonal employers in the mobile amusement industry cannot plan for future business growth, purchase new rides/equipment and execute contracts with America's fairs, etc., when there is continued uncertainty with the H-2B visa program from one year to the next.

Clarifying the Official Ask of a Congressional Office

Seasonal employers such as carnivals cannot recruit enough U.S. workers under any circumstances to maintain an adequate legal workforce to meet their contractual obligations during the season of operation. The existing statutory cap of 66,000 is outdated and inadequate especially during a strong economy with low unemployment. ***Congress needs to provide a permanent and substantial increase in the number of H-2B visas available every year. We need your commitment to help pass authorizing language this year to accomplish that goal.***

How to Advocate on Capitol Hill

Before scheduling and finalizing any meetings on the Hill, it is important for you to know your member. If you have developed a relationship with him/her, presumably, you already know something about them. However, understanding the district, committee assignments, legislative priorities of the Member is really important. You can do your research by google, the Member's website, or by signing up for the Member's newsletter or other electronic communication tool. Once the meeting is scheduled, here are a few pointers to follow:

1. **Be clear on the "ask"**– know the issues and some background on the topic before the meeting - lay out our objectives clearly and succinctly during the first few minutes of your meeting and ensure that you make the official ask (see page 1) early in your presentation. It is important to note that these congressional appointments can be as short as a few minutes and usually no more than 12-15 minutes (especially if meeting with a Member).
2. **Know to whom you're talking** – understanding the Congressional office hierarchy is important. Not visiting with the Member is not the end of the world - meeting with the Chief of Staff or Legislative Director is a huge win as these individuals influence policy and strategy in the office. A meeting with the Legislative Assistant who handles the portfolio that includes our issues is extremely helpful. However, meeting with the Staff Assistant or Legislative Correspondent (unless they handle these issues) is generally not a valuable use of time.
3. **Know your issue** – understand the issues, understand the pros and cons of the "ask" and always remember to say you do not have the answer to a question if you cannot answer it – but be prepared to follow-up with the information requested.
4. **Connect your issue to the Member's district or state** – it is always more impactful and meaningful to a Member or the office if you can make a personal connection to the District. For instance, how many constituents do you employ in the district, how many people attend your Fair or Expo, what is the impact to the district if the ask is not met, etc.
5. **The Three Don'ts**
 - a. **Do not be long-winded** in your meeting. This issue is important to us, but there are 15 other top priorities that the staffer you are meeting with is dealing with. Keeping it short and concise is what will set you apart from others.
 - b. **Do not bury the ask** (deliver our ask/request in first 5 minutes of the meeting)
 - c. **Do not go off message**
6. **Leave Prepared Materials Behind** – Materials should be short, concise and reiterate the ask with some additional background information. Make sure your contact information is provided in the material.
7. **Follow-up ASAP** - Thank the Member of Congress and/or Hill Staffer for their time with a reminder of the topic of the meeting in the note for reference. Send along information from a reliable source to keep the Member's office aware of your issue. Enhance and develop the relationship further by attending public events or town halls in your district to increase your visibility and build your relationships with the office to serve as a trustworthy resource on your issue.