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they also acknowledge its limitations. First, the administration and bureaucratic process for H-2B is considered an important program limitation. Superintendents would prefer a program more streamlined and easy to use. Second, there are limits on how many new H-2B workers can enter the country annually. For 2008, the number of new workers is capped at 66,000, so low that not all superintendents and other eligible employers who want H-2B workers at the present time can hire them. This greatly limits the opportunity to hire legally authorized Hispanic immigrants. Concern over the H-2B cap is evident from Figure 9. More than 80% of the survey respondents indicated that increasing the number of H-2B workers was either important, quite important or very important.

The H-2B program appears to be a double edged sword for golf course superintendents. On one hand, it is an effective way to attract a legally authorized immigrant workforce. On the other hand, it is considered expensive, cumbersome and limited by the cap in workers allowed into the program. The answers to the open ended questions sometimes made reference to a generic guest worker program or a program that will provide work visas. This suggests that some survey respondents may be looking for an easier more efficient

alternative to the H-2B program.

Overwhelmingly, participants in the survey wanted to see changes in immigration policy. When asked how important they feel immigration reform was to the golf course management industry, more than 90% answered that the issue was either important, quite important or very important. More than 75% said that a path to citizenship or legal status was important.

Conclusion

The golf course superintendents surveyed all employ Hispanic workers. This was intentional in order to gather information from those most likely to be directly impacted by future immigration policy discussions. Survey participants recognized the difficulties with unauthorized workers and clearly would like to see legislative solutions to the challenges created by their presence in the labor pool. The challenge ahead for the industry will be to determine how to most effectively influence the political process to achieve immigration reform and to advocate for improvements in the H-2B program.

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NYSTA would like to recognize the following associations, clubs and superintendents for hosting these 2009 fundraiser tournaments to benefit the turfgrass industry.

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